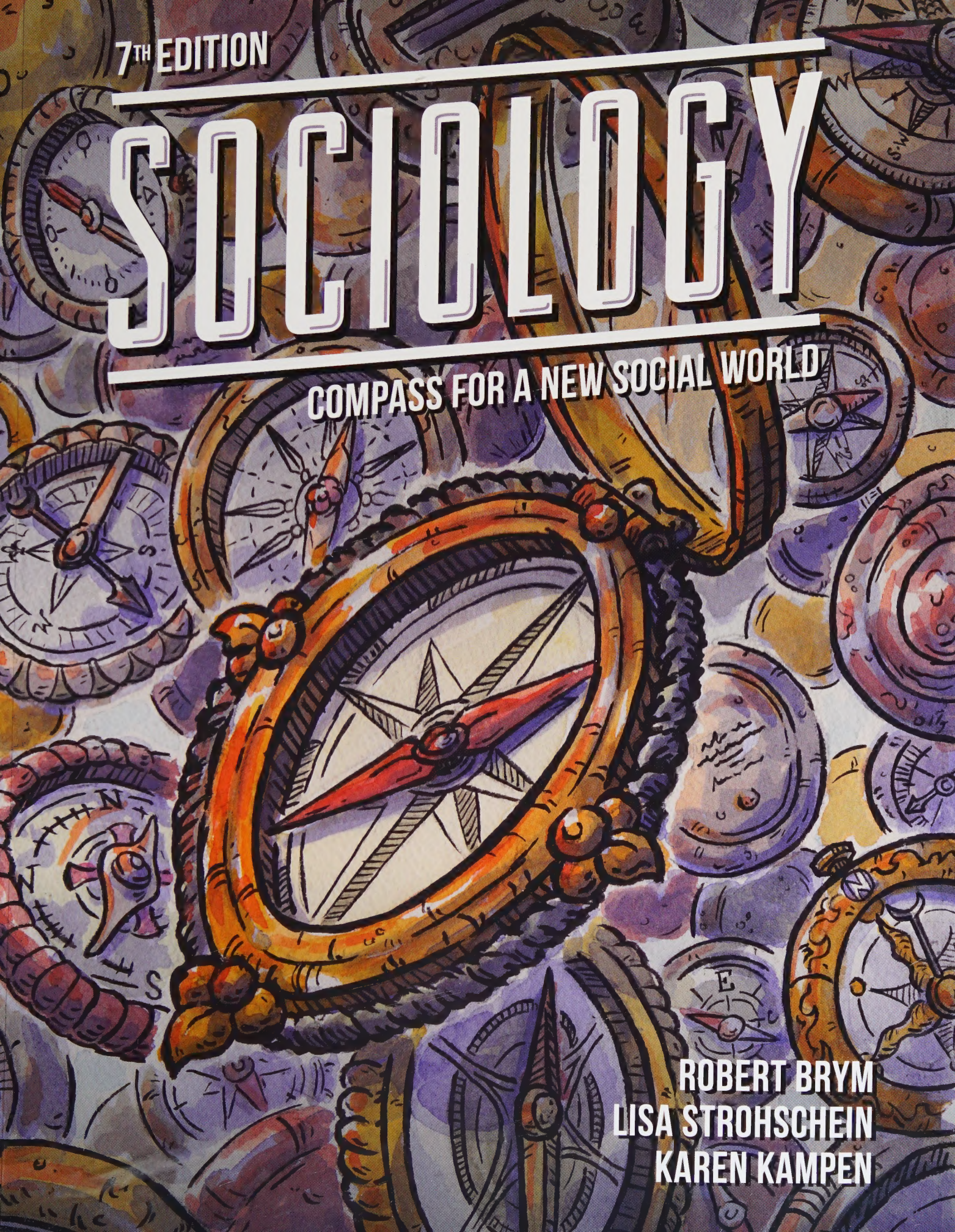
7TH EDITION

SOCIOLOGY

COMPASS FOR A NEW SOCIAL WORLD



ROBERT BRYM
LISA STROHSCHEIN
KAREN KAMPEN

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7TH EDITION

SOCIOLOGY

COMPASS FOR A NEW SOCIAL WORLD

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Dedication

Many authors seem to be afflicted with stoic family members who gladly allow them to spend endless hours buried in their work. I suffer no such misfortune. The members of my family have demanded that I focus on what really matters in life. I think that focus has made this a better book. I am deeply grateful to Rhonda Lenton, Shira Friedland-Brym, Talia Greenspoon, Ariella Lenton-Brym, Sophie Friedland, Molly Friedland, Ben Friedland, and Jeff Greenspoon. I dedicate this book to them with thanks and love.

Robert Brym

To students past and present whose passion and enthusiasm continue to inspire me. And most of all, thanks to my husband, Frank, whose love and support sustains me through it all.

Lisa Strohschein

In memory of my parents, Marian and Hjalmar Kampen, and brother David Kampen. Their struggles motivated me to do something with my life that contributes to making the world a better place. With gratitude to my husband, Andrew, and children, Angela, Ryan, and Sarah, for helping me along the journey.

Karen Kampen

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KAREN KAMPEN was born in Vancouver and raised in Winnipeg, and received her master's degree from the University of Alberta. She has been an instructor in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Manitoba since 2002. Along with Lance Roberts, she co-authored *The Methods Coach* and *The Statistics Coach* (Oxford University Press), and she is a contributing author to *Statistics for Social Science* with Steve Hayward et al. (Top Hat Inc.) She is currently developing a new course called Sociology of the Life Course. Karen is an avid volunteer in her community and is happiest when spending time in the wilderness with her family.

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Preface

COMPASS FOR A NEW SOCIAL WORLD

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.
>
> —Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (2002 [1859])

Dickens refers to the end of the eighteenth century, yet he offers a prophetic description of the times in which we live. We, too, have set sail at the dawn of an age of superlatives, an age of uncertainty.

Over the past few decades, we have torn old countries apart and created new ones. We proclaimed a new era of medical breakthroughs with the sequencing of the human genome, yet learned that the plague is still with us in the form of HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, and other viruses. After some economists proclaimed that recessions were a thing of the past, we experienced a devastating economic crisis in 2008–09 that bankrupted many companies and individuals. We recovered, only to be walloped again by the pandemic that began in late 2019 and, as of this writing, is still very much with us. We saw the world's mood and its political and economic outlook buoyant one day, anxious the next, as terrorist attacks and wars led us further into an era of uncertainty. Frightening new words entered our vocabulary: climate change, ISIS, Trump.

The world is an unpredictable place. It is especially disorienting for students entering adulthood. We wrote this book to show undergraduates that sociology can help them make sense of their lives, however uncertain they may appear to be. We hope it will serve as their sociological compass in the new world they are entering as young adults. Moreover, we show that sociology can be a liberating practical activity, not just an abstract intellectual exercise. By revealing the opportunities and constraints we face, sociology can help us navigate our lives, teaching us who we are and what we can become in this particular social and historical context. We cannot know what the future will bring, but we can at least know the choices we confront and the likely consequences of our actions. From this point of view, sociology can help us create the best possible future. That has always been sociology's principal justification, and so it should be today.

UNIQUE FEATURES

We have tried to keep sociology's main purpose and relevance front and centre in this book. As a result, *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* differs from other major introductory sociology textbooks in four ways:

1. ***Drawing connections between one's self and the social world.*** To varying degrees, all introductory sociology textbooks try to show students how their personal experiences connect to the larger social world. However, we employ two devices to make these connections clearer than in other textbooks. First, we illustrate key sociological ideas by using examples from popular culture that resonate deeply with student interests and experiences. For example, in Chapter 1, A Sociological Compass, we illustrate functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic

interactionism, and feminism in a section titled "Dating and Hooking Up from Four Theoretical Perspectives." Chapter 2, How Sociologists Do Research, analyzes climate change denial, Halloween sadism myths, the COVID-19 "infodemic," and belief in psychics to illustrate the pitfalls of unscientific thinking. Chapter 5, Social Interaction, discusses the way in which online porn and sexbots reinforce male-female power dynamics. In Chapter 7, Deviance and Crime, we illustrate the normalization of actions typically considered deviant by examining violence in Canadian hockey. Scrutiny of Disneyworld and the Disney Corporation in Chapter 8, Social Stratification, introduces an investigation of the relationship between economic inequality and happiness. Chapter 17, Mass and Social Media, not only gives us the opportunity to discuss the rise of social media and its consequences for identity, social relations, and social activism but enables us to probe more deeply into media segmentation, fake news, and "truth bubbles." The #MeToo movement, the Arab Spring, and the digital control of social movements are explored in Chapter 18, Collective Action and Social Movements. We believe these and many other examples speak directly to today's students about important sociological ideas in terms they can relate to, thus making the connection between self and society clear.

We also developed unique pedagogical features to draw the connection between students' experiences and the larger social world. Sociology and the Media boxes analyze problematic aspects of social media and provide brief reviews of movies and television shows, highlighting the sociological issues media raise and the sociological insights they embody.

2. ***What to think versus how to think.*** All textbooks teach students both *what* to think about a subject and *how* to think about it from a particular disciplinary perspective. However, in our judgment, introductory sociology textbooks usually place too much stress on the "what" and not enough on the "how." The result is that they sometimes read more like encyclopedias than enticements to look at the world in a new way. We have tipped the balance in the other direction.

   Of course, *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* contains definitions and critical literature reviews. It features standard pedagogical aids, such as a list of chapter objectives at the beginning of each chapter, a Time for Review feature at the end of each major section of every chapter, a detailed Summary at the end of each chapter, and definitions of key terms in the margins of the text. However, we devote more space than other authors do to showing how sociologists think. We often relate an anecdote to highlight an issue's importance, present contending interpretations of the issue, and then adduce data to judge the merits of the various interpretations. We do not just refer to tables and graphs, we analyze them. When evidence warrants, we reject theories and endorse others. Thus, sections of the book read more like simplified journal articles than an encyclopedia.

   If all of this sounds just like what sociologists do professionally, then we have achieved our aim: to present a less antiseptic, more realistic, and therefore intrinsically exciting account of how sociologists practise their craft. Said differently, one of the strengths of this book is that it does not present sociology as a set of immutable truths carved in stone tablets. Instead, it shows how sociologists actually go about the business of solving sociological puzzles.

3. ***Objectivity versus subjectivity.*** Sociologists since Max Weber have understood that sociologists—indeed, all scientists—are members of society whose thinking and research are influenced by the social and historical context in which they work. Yet most introductory sociology textbooks present a stylized and, frankly, unsociological view of the research process. Textbooks tend to emphasize sociology's objectivity and the hypothetico-deductive method of reasoning, for the most part ignoring the more subjective factors that go into the research mix. We think this emphasis is a pedagogical error. In our teaching, we have found that drawing the connection between objectivity and subjectivity in sociological

The text features student-tested **pedagogical aids.**

Time for Review

- Why are any two strangers connected by just a few social links?
- How can weak ties yield strong results when searching for a job?
- When the scale of a network increases from two to three node possibilities for so

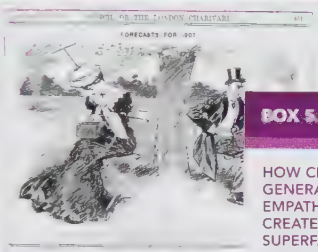
IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO:

- Recognize that although people usually act to satisfy their interests and emotions, social collectivities often influence people to suppress their emotions and act against their interests.
- Illustrate the fact that only a few social ties separate us from complete strangers.
- Distinguish social networks, groups, bureaucracies, and societies.
- Identify ways in which social groups impose conformity on members and draw boundaries between those who belong and those who do not.
- Describe how bureaucracies can be made more efficient.
- Explain how humans' changing relationship to nature has affected population size, permanence of settlements, the specialization of work tasks, labour productivity, and social inequality.

Sociology and the Media offer sociological insights gleaned from current films, popular television shows, and social media, demonstrating sociology's vitality and relevance to students' lives. Accompanying thought-provoking questions encourage students to think critically about the media they consume.

BOX 3.2 Sociology and the Media

SMARTPHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND THE TWO FACES OF CULTURE



BOX 5.1 Sociology and the Media

HOW CELEBRITIES GENERATE FAN EMPATHY AND CREATE VICIOUS SUPERFANS

Ariana Grande, 2018

Much like ordinary people interacting in everyday life, celebrities compete with each other for attention (Ivan Kreaken, 2018). The more attention they and their publicity teams generate on social media, the bigger their audience, the more prestige they enjoy, and the more money they earn.

How do celebrities cultivate attention? The key lies in their willingness to disclose the intimate details of their lives, allowing fans to feel like trusted confidantes. For instance, Ariana Grande has tweeted details about her upset over the suicide bombing at her 2017 concert in Manchester, England, her 2018 breakup with comedian Pete Davidson, her anguish over the overdose death of her ex-boyfriend Mac Miller that same year, and other personal issues. By disclosing such intimate details about her life, Grande enables fans to empathize so deeply with her that some of them are prepared to viciously attack anyone who appears to add to her pain (Rojek, 2016). Thus, in 2019, when Toronto blogger Rosylyn Taluson called Ariana Grande a "spoiled white girl" who pays people to write her music," she wasn't prepared for the backlash, including Instagram posts wishing that both she and her children would be murdered (Krishnan, 2019). As this example shows, while social media can facilitate empathy or aggression, it can also facilitate sympathy and aggression. It turns out that social interaction in the world of social media is no less complex than social interaction in the "real" world.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Could the aggressive behaviour of superfans against critics of their celebrity idols be constrained? If so, how?
2. Why have celebrities not asked their superfans to refrain from aggressively defending them against critics?

BOX 12.2 Social Policy

COVID-19 AND THE VACCINATION DEBATE

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced society's dependence on medicine. Yet many Canadians doubt medical expertise. They think medicine often does more harm than good.

Consider the recent spike in measles and whooping cough outbreaks in Canada. Vaccinations for these diseases were discovered more than 60 years ago. After the vaccinations became widely available, both diseases, historically leading killers of children, were nearly wiped out. Why then are outbreaks occurring today? Because a growing number of parents refuse to have their children vaccinated against these diseases. Some parents think vaccines will cause their child to develop autism despite the absence of any scientific evidence supporting the claim. Other parents are simply vaccine-hesitant—they are swayed by numerous Internet forums promoting the message that vaccines are unsafe—again, with no credible evidence. With fewer than 70 percent of Canadians confident in the safety of vaccines (Wellcome Global Monitor, 2019), a surge in childhood infectious disease was entirely predictable.

In 2020, public health officials anticipated that people who zealously opposed vaccines would say the COVID-19 vaccine was rushed to market and is therefore unsafe. However, the plain fact is that Canadians who refuse to be vaccinated against COVID-19 will be at risk of infection, complications, and death, while Canadian taxpayers responsible for the cost of their health care

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Should the government require Canadians to be vaccinated against COVID-19? Should the risk to the general population outweigh personal

Social Policy boxes invite students to engage critically with issues related to social policy.

BOX 10.2 Social Policy

JURY SELECTION AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN CANADA

In 2016, Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley, a White man, shot and killed Colten Boushie, an Indigenous man. Boushie and his friends were on Stanley's property, apparently with the intent to steal. Stanley got a gun. An altercation took place. Stanley claimed the gun malfunctioned and "just went off" at close range. The shot killed Boushie, and Stanley was charged with second-degree murder.

At the trial in 2018, a firearms expert testified there was nothing wrong with the gun. A forensics expert found another part of Stanley's testimony problematic. When a person is shot at close range, a considerable amount of gunpowder is found on the victim. However, only extremely small traces of gunpowder were found on Boushie's clothing. The forensics expert testified that that was not what he'd expect for a close-range shot. In other words, the evidence was consistent with a long-range shot, suggesting not that the gun went off during a face-to-face altercation but that Stanley shot Boushie intentionally from a distance. Nonetheless, Stanley was acquitted in 2018.

In murder trials, the guilt or innocence of the accused is supposed to be decided by a jury that reflects community norms. The trial took place in Battleford, a Saskatchewan town in which one-fifth of the population is Indigenous. However, the jury at Stanley's trial was all White. That is significant because anti-Indigenous prejudice is stronger in rural and small-town Saskatchewan than anywhere else in Canada.

Why was the jury all White? Because, during jury selection, the lawyers were allowed to reject up to a dozen potential jurors without giving a reason for doing so. This practice, known as *peremptory challenge*, was permitted by section 634 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

There is no evidence to suggest that Stanley's lawyer was a racist. He acted completely within the law and in the interest of his client by rejecting potential jurors who were Indigenous. But the law—specifically, the principle of peremptory challenge—had racist implications in and of itself because it allowed Indigenous people to be rejected as jurors (Butt, 2018). The practice exemplifies institutional racism. Recognizing this fact, section 634 of the Criminal Code of Canada was repealed in 2019.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Health professionals recognize that the diets of many Indigenous Canadians are high in sugar, salt, and fat and low in lean protein, vegetables, and complex carbohydrates. However, if you live in remote areas of the country, healthy food is very expensive. A kilogram of apples costs about $3.40 in Toronto versus $8.80 in the Northwest Territories. Is Canada's food distribution system an agent of institutionalized racism? Why or why not?
2. Educators know that student self-esteem is critically important to learning. Is a school system that teaches only the contributions of White people to human culture an agent of institutional racism? Why or why not?

research makes the discipline more appealing to students. It shows how research issues are connected to the lives of real flesh-and-blood women and men, and how sociology is related to students' existential concerns. Therefore, in many chapters of the book, we include a personal anecdote that explains how certain sociological issues first arose in our own minds. We often adopt a narrative style because stories let students understand ideas on an emotional and an intellectual level. We do so because when we form an emotional attachment to ideas, they stay with us more effectively than if our attachment is solely cognitive. We place the ideas of important sociological figures in social and historical context. We show how sociological methodologies serve as a reality check, but we also make it clear that socially grounded personal concerns often lead sociologists to decide which aspects of reality are worth checking on in the first place. In short, we believe these devices make *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* unique in presenting a realistic and balanced account of the role of objectivity and subjectivity in the research process.

4. ***Diversity and a global perspective.*** It is gratifying to see how much less parochial introductory sociology textbooks are today than they were just a few decades ago. Contemporary textbooks highlight gender and race issues. They broaden students' understanding of the world by comparing Canada with other societies. They show how global processes affect local issues and vice versa. *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* makes diversity and globalization prominent themes, too. We employ cross-national comparisons between Canada and countries as diverse as India and Sweden. We incorporate maps that illustrate the distribution of sociological variables globally and regionally, and the relationship among variables across time and space. We remain sensitive to gender and race issues throughout. This has been easy for us because we have travelled widely, lived in other countries for extended periods, conducted research on countries other than Canada, and speak multiple languages. As you will see in the following pages, our backgrounds have enabled us to add more depth to issues of diversity and globalization than other textbooks do.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

We have been gratified and moved by the positive response this book has elicited from numerous readers and reviewers. At the same time, we benefited from the constructive criticisms they generously offered. This edition of *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* is a response to many of their suggestions. The innovations in this edition include the following:

- Throughout, we added new research findings and incorporated data from the most recent Canadian census to keep the book as up to date as possible. This new edition contains more than 60 new and revised figures, as well as 25 new and revised tables.
- We have included, increased, and updated coverage of such timely issues as the following:
  - the wide-reaching effects of COVID-19
  - dating and hookup culture
  - big data
  - hip-hop culture
  - the legalization of marijuana
  - forms of punishment other than incarceration
  - universal basic income
  - the rise of right-wing populism
  - intersectionality
  - racialization
  - surveillance

- **Sociology and the Media** is an especially popular feature of this book. Accordingly, we review recent movies and TV shows such as *Joker, The Hollywood Medium, The Society, Westworld, The Grizzlies, Love Is Blind, and Thirteen Reasons Why*. We also explore timely issues such as Government digital censorship and surveillance, how social media helped Trump win, and social media and the Arab Spring.
- **Social Policy** boxed features cover hot topics ranging from how authorities seek to control protest digitally, the ban on religious symbols in Québec, the Canadian pipeline debate, the decline and revival of Indigenous and other languages, and the use of facial recognition software in policing.

ANCILLARIES

A full range of high-quality ancillaries has been prepared to help instructors and students get the most out of *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World*.

Supplements for Instructors

All key instructor ancillaries are provided in the Instructor Resources at **login.cengage.com**, giving instructors the ultimate tool for customizing lectures and presentations.

Test Bank: This resource was updated and revised by Darlene Balandin of Western University, and is available on a cloud-based platform. **Testing Powered by Cognero®** is a secure online testing system that allows instructors to author, edit, and manage test-bank content from anywhere Internet access is available. No special installations or downloads are needed, and the desktop-inspired interface, with its drop-down menus and familiar, intuitive tools, allows instructors to create and manage tests with ease. Multiple test versions can be created in an instant, and content can be imported or exported into other systems. Tests can be delivered from a learning management system, the classroom, or wherever an instructor chooses. Testing Powered by Cognero for *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World*, seventh edition can be accessed through http://login.cengage.com.

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PowerPoint: Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides were revised and updated by Darlene Balandin of Western University. There is an average of 45 slides per chapter, many featuring key figures, tables, and photographs from *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World*, seventh edition. Instructor notes have been incorporated throughout, making it simple for instructors to customize the deck for their courses.

Image Library: This resource consists of digital copies of figures, tables, and photographs used in the book. Instructors may use these JPEGs to customize the PowerPoint slides or create their own PowerPoint presentations. The Image Library Key describes the images and lists the codes under which the JPEGs are saved.

Instructor Guide: This resource was updated and revised by textbook author Lisa Strohschein of the University of Alberta. It is organized according to the textbook chapters and addresses key educational concerns, such as typical stumbling blocks students face and how to address them. Other features include in-class activities, suggested videos, and the answers to the Questions to Consider found at the end of each chapter.

MindTap: Updated and revised by textbook author Karen Kampen of the University of Manitoba, MindTap is the digital learning solution that powers students from memorization to mastery. It gives instructors complete control of their course—to provide engaging content, challenge every individual, and build student confidence. Instructors can customize interactive syllabi to emphasize priority topics as well as add their own material or notes to the ebook as desired. This outcome-driven application gives instructors the tools needed to empower students and boost both understanding and performance.

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Student Resources

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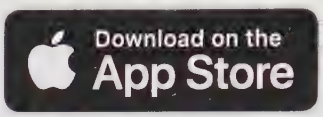
MindTap Modern students require modern solutions. MindTap is a flexible all-in-one teaching and learning platform that includes the full ebook, a customizable learning path, and various course-specific activities that drive student engagement and critical thinking.

Download the Cengage Mobile App: Get access to a full, interactive ebook, readable online or off; study tools that empower anytime, anywhere learning; and 24/7 course access. The Cengage Mobile app keeps students focused and ready to study whenever it is convenient for them.



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Anyone who has gone sailing knows that when you embark on a long voyage, you need more than a compass. Among other things, you need a helm operator blessed with a strong sense of direction and an intimate knowledge of likely dangers. You need crew members who know all the ropes and can use them to keep things intact and in their proper place. And you need sturdy hands to raise and lower the sails. On the voyage to complete this book, the crew demonstrated all these skills. We are especially grateful to our publisher, **Leanna MacLean**, who saw this book's promise from the outset, understood clearly the direction we had to take to develop its potential, and on several occasions steered us clear of threatening shoals. We are also deeply indebted to the following crew members:

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PART 1
Foundations

CHAPTER 1
A Sociological Compass

CHAPTER 2
How Sociologists Do Research

1 A Sociological Compass

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Define sociology.
- Identify the social relations that surround you, permeate you, and influence your behaviour.
- Describe how sociological research seeks to improve people's lives and test ideas using scientific methods.
- Summarize sociology's major theoretical perspectives.
- Appreciate how sociology emerged out of the Scientific, Democratic, and Industrial Revolutions.
- Understand the main challenges facing society today.

Jacob Lund/Shutterstock

Introduction

Why You Need a Compass for a New World

"When I was a small child growing up in New Brunswick in the 1950s, Lena White, an Indigenous woman, would come to our home from time to time, and my mother would serve us lunch," recalls Robert Brym, one of this book's authors. "I was fond of Lena because she told good stories. During dessert, as we sipped tea with milk, Lena would spin tales about Gluskap, the Creator of the world.

"I liked Gluskap because he fought giants, drove away monsters, taught people how to hunt and farm, and named the stars. But he also got into trouble and learned from his mistakes. For example, one day the wind was blowing so hard, Gluskap couldn't paddle his canoe into the bay to hunt ducks. So he found the source of the wind: the flapping wings of the Wind Eagle. He then tricked the Wind Eagle into getting stuck in a crevice where he could flap no more. Now Gluskap could go hunting. However, the air soon grew so hot, he found it difficult to breathe. The water became dirty and began to smell bad, and there was so much foam on it, he found it hard to paddle. When he complained to his grandmother, she explained that the wind was needed to cool the air, wash the earth, and move the waters to keep them clean. And so Gluskap freed the Wind Eagle and the winds returned to Earth. Gluskap decided it was better to wait for good weather and then go duck hunting, rather than to conquer the winds.

"Like the tale of the Wind Eagle, many of the Gluskap stories Lena told me were about the need for harmony among humans and between humans and nature. You can therefore imagine my surprise when I got to school and learned about the European exploration of what was called the New World. My teachers taught me about the glories of the *conquest* of nature—and of other people. I learned that in the New World, an Indigenous population perhaps a hundredth as large as Europe's occupied a territory more than four times larger. I was taught that the New World was unimaginably rich in resources. European rulers saw that by controlling it, they could increase their power and importance. Christians recognized new possibilities for spreading their religion. Explorers discerned fresh opportunities for rewarding adventures. A wave of excitement swelled as word spread of the New World's vast potential and challenges. I, too, became excited as I heard stories of conquest quite unlike the tales of Gluskap. Of course, I learned little about the violence required to conquer the New World."

In the 1950s, I was caught between thrilling stories of conquest and reflective stories that questioned the wisdom of conquest. Today, I think many people are in a similar position. On the one hand, we feel like the European explorers because we, too, have reached the frontiers of a New World. Like them, we are full of anticipation. Our New World is one of instant long-distance communication, global economies and cultures, and scientific advances that often make the daily news seem like reports from a distant planet. In a fundamental way, the world is not the same place it was just 50 or 60 years ago.

On the other hand, we understand that not all is hope and bright horizons. Our anticipation is mixed with dread. Gluskap stories make more sense than ever. Scientific breakthroughs are announced almost daily, but the global environment has never been in worse shape. Marriages and nations unexpectedly break up and then reconstitute themselves in new and unanticipated forms. We celebrate the advances made by women and minority groups only to find that some people oppose their progress, sometimes violently. Waves of people

© William Dennis Kinchlea

Gluskap

migrate between continents, establishing cooperation but also conflict between previously separated groups. New technologies make work more interesting and creative for some, offering unprecedented opportunities to become rich and famous. But they also make jobs more onerous and routine for others. The standard of living goes up for many people but stagnates or deteriorates for many more.

Sociology is the systematic study of human behaviour in social context.

Amid all this contradictory news, uncertainty about the future prevails. That is why my colleagues and I wrote this book. We set out to show undergraduates that **sociology**—the systematic study of human behaviour in social context—can help them make sense of their lives, however uncertain they may appear to be. Five hundred years ago, the early European explorers of North and South America set themselves the task of mapping the contours of the New World. We set ourselves a similar task here. Their frontiers were physical; ours are social. Their maps were geographical; ours are sociological. But in terms of functionality, our maps are much like theirs. All maps allow us to find our place in the world and see ourselves in the context of larger forces. Sociological maps, as the famous American sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote, allow us to "grasp the interplay of [people] and society, of biography and history" (Mills, 1959: 4). This book, then, shows you how to draw sociological maps so you can see your place in the world, figure out how to navigate through it, and perhaps discover how to improve it. It is your sociological compass.

We emphasize that sociology can be a liberating practical activity, not just an abstract intellectual exercise. By revealing the opportunities and constraints you face, sociology can help teach you who you are and what you can become in today's social and historical context. We cannot know what the future will bring, but we can at least know the choices we confront and the likely consequences of our actions. From this point of view, sociology can help us create the best possible future. That has always been sociology's principal justification, and so it must be today.

The Goals of This Chapter

This chapter has three goals:

1. The first goal is to illustrate the power of sociology to dispel foggy assumptions and help us see the operation of the social world more clearly. To that end, we examine a phenomenon that at first glance appears to be solely the outcome of breakdowns in *individual* functioning: suicide. We show that, in fact, *social* relations powerfully influence suicide rates. This exercise introduces you to the unique qualities of the sociological perspective.
2. The chapter's second goal is to show that, from its origins, sociological research has been motivated by a desire to improve the social world. Thus, sociology is not a dry academic exercise but a means of charting a better course for society. At the same time, sociologists use scientific methods to test their ideas, thus increasing the validity of these ideas. We illustrate these points by briefly analyzing the work of the founders of the discipline.
3. The chapter's third goal is to suggest that sociology can help you come to grips with your century, just as it helped the founders of sociology deal with theirs. Today, we are witnessing massive and disorienting social changes. As was the case 100 or 150 years ago, sociologists now try to understand social phenomena and suggest credible ways of improving society. By promising to make sociology relevant to you, this chapter is an invitation to participate in sociology's challenge.

Before showing how sociology can help you understand and improve your world, we briefly examine the problem of suicide. This examination will help illustrate how the sociological perspective can clarify and sometimes overturn common-sense beliefs.

The Sociological Perspective

Analyzing suicide sociologically tests the claim that sociology takes a unique, surprising, and enlightening perspective on social events. After all, suicide appears to be a supremely

antisocial and non-social act. It is condemned by nearly everyone in society, typically carried out in private, and comparatively rare: In 2017, the latest year for which data are available, there were 11.4 suicides for every 100 000 people in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019a; see Figure 1.1). Moreover, when you think about why people carry out such acts, you are likely to focus on their individual states of mind rather than on the state of society—we are usually interested in the events that caused individuals to become depressed or angry enough to do something as awful as killing themselves. We do not usually think about the patterns of social relations that might encourage or inhibit such actions. If sociology can reveal the hidden social causes of such an apparently non-social and antisocial phenomenon, there must be something to it!

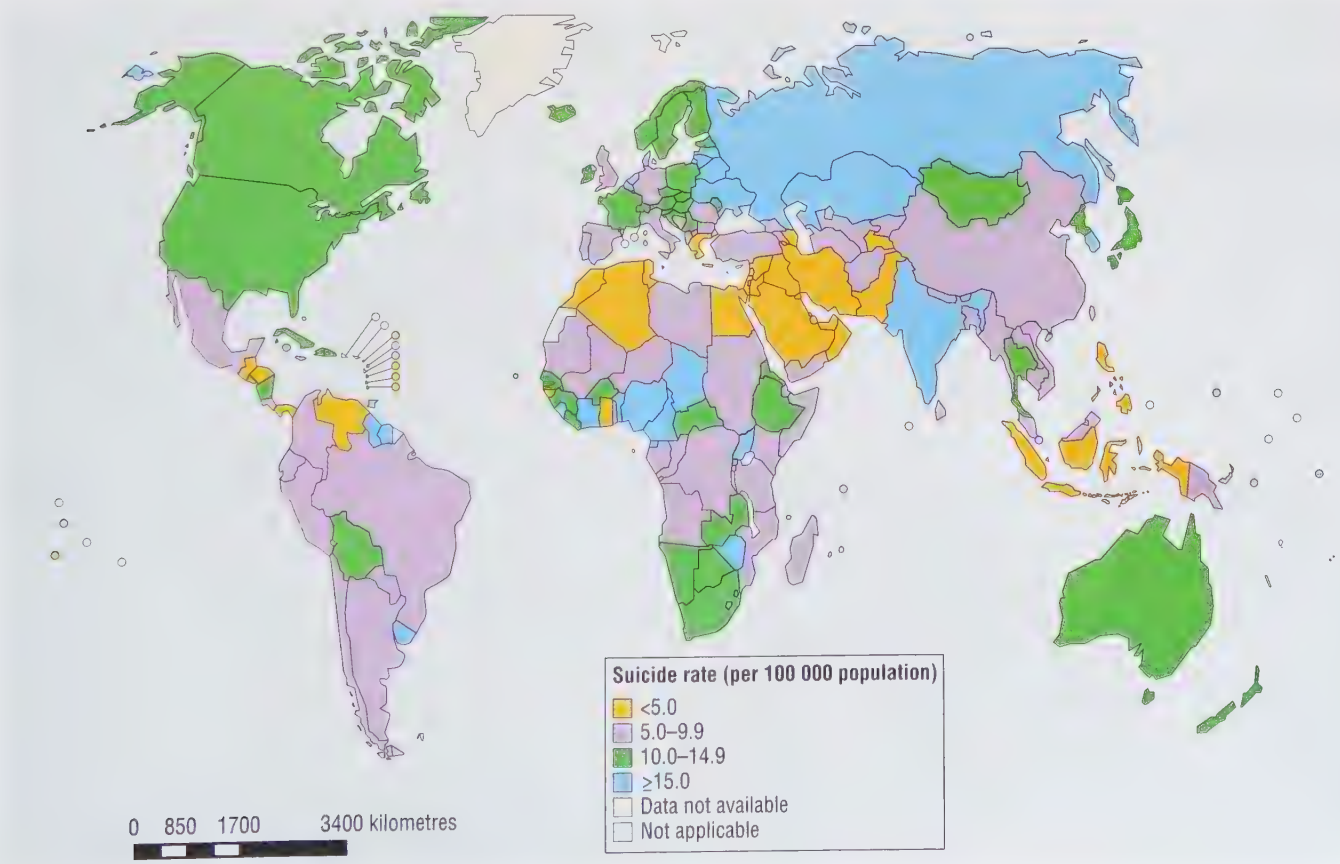
The Sociological Explanation of Suicide

At the end of the nineteenth century, Émile Durkheim (1951 [1897]) demonstrated that suicide is more than just an individual act of desperation that results from a psychological disorder, as was commonly believed at the time. Social forces, he showed, strongly influence suicide rates.

Durkheim made his case by examining the association between rates of suicide and rates of psychological disorder for different groups. The idea that psychological disorder causes suicide is supported, he reasoned, only if suicide rates tend to be high where rates of psychological disorder are high and low where rates of psychological disorder are low. However, his analysis of European government statistics, hospital records, and other sources revealed nothing of the kind. For example, he discovered that insane asylums housed slightly more women than men, but there were four male suicides for every female suicide. Among the major religious groups in France, Jews had the highest rate of psychological disorder, but also the lowest suicide rate. Durkheim also found that psychological disorders occurred most

FIGURE 1.1

Age-Standardized Suicide Rates (per 100 000 Population), Both Sexes, 2016



Source: Reprinted from "Suicide data," World Health Organization, Copyright 2018. https://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/

Alex Colville Pacific 1967 acrylic on hardboard, copyright A.C. Fine Art Inc.

Alex Colville's *Pacific* (1967)
acrylic on hardboard

frequently when a person reached adulthood, but suicide rates increased steadily with age.

Clearly, suicide rates and rates of psychological disorder did not vary directly. In fact, they often appeared to vary inversely. Why? Durkheim held that suicide rates varied because of differences in the degree of **social solidarity** in various categories of the population. According to Durkheim, the more a group's members share beliefs and values, and the more often and strongly they interact, the greater their group's social solidarity. In turn, the greater the group's social solidarity, the more connected members are to society, and the less likely they are to take their own life if adversity strikes. In other words, Durkheim expected high-solidarity groups to have lower suicide rates than low-solidarity groups—at least up to a point (see Figure 1.2).

To support his argument, Durkheim showed that married adults are half as likely as unmarried adults to die by suicide. That is because marriage creates social ties and a sort of moral cement that connect individuals to society. Similarly, he noted that women are less likely to die by suicide than men are because women tend to be more involved in the intimate social relations of family life. He also wrote that Jews are less likely to die by suicide than Christians are because centuries of persecution have turned them into a group that is more defensive and tightly knit. And the elderly are more likely than the young and the middle-aged to take their own lives when they encounter hardship because they are most likely to live alone, to have lost a spouse, and to not work or have a wide network of friends. In general, Durkheim wrote, "suicide varies with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part" (Durkheim, 1951 [1897]: 209). Note that his generalization tells us nothing about why a particular *individual* may take his/her/their life. That explanation is the province of psychology. But it does tell us that a person's likelihood of dying by suicide decreases with the degree to which he or she is anchored in society. And it says something surprising and uniquely sociological about how and why the suicide rate varies across groups.

Social solidarity refers to (1) the degree to which group members share beliefs and values, and (2) the intensity and frequency of their interaction.

Suicide in Canada Today

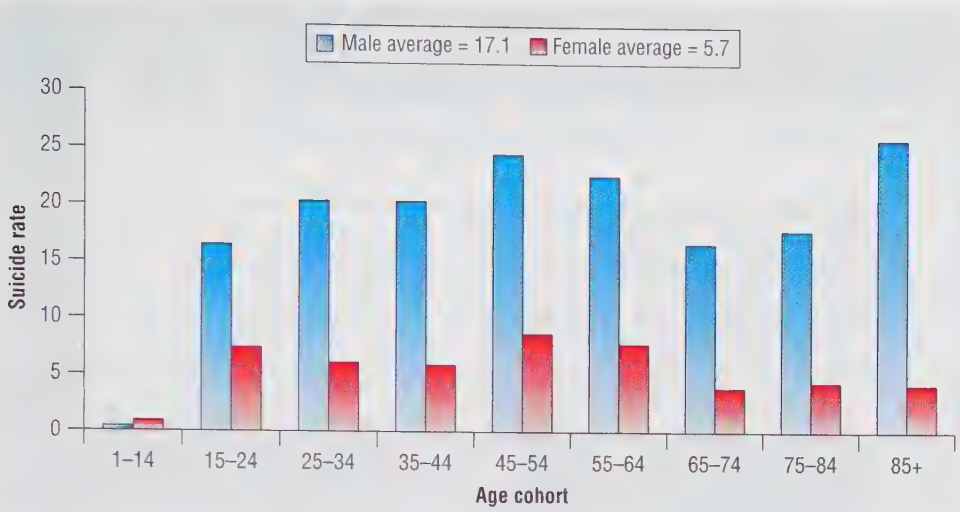
Durkheim's theory is not just a historical curiosity. It sheds light on the factors that account for variations in suicide rates today. Consider Figure 1.3, which shows suicide rates by age and sex in Canada. Comparing rates for men and women, we immediately see that, as in Durkheim's France, men are about three times as likely as women are to die by suicide. However, in other respects, Canada today differs from France more than a century ago. For example, in Durkheim's time, suicide was rare among youth. In Canada today, youth suicide is more common, having increased substantially since the 1960s.

FIGURE 1.2

Durkheim argued that, as the level of social solidarity increases, the suicide rate declines—and then, beyond a certain point, starts to rise. Durkheim called suicide in high-solidarity settings *altruistic*. Soldiers who knowingly give up their lives to protect comrades commit altruistic suicide. Suicide in low-solidarity settings is *egoistic* or *anomic*. Egoistic suicide results from the poor integration of people into society because of weak social ties to others. For instance, someone who is unemployed has weaker social ties and is thus more likely to die by suicide than someone who is employed. Anomic suicide occurs when vague norms govern behaviour. Thus, the rate of anomic suicide is likely to be high among people living in a society lacking a widely shared code of morality.

Source: Robert Brym

FIGURE 1.3
Suicide by Age and Sex, Canada, 2017



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, "Leading causes of death, total population, by age group" (2019b). Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310039401

Although the rate of youth suicide was low in Durkheim's France, his theory of social solidarity helps us understand why the youth suicide rate has risen in Canada. In brief, shared moral principles and strong social ties have eroded since the early 1960s, especially for Canadian youth. Consider the following facts:

1. More than half of Canadians attended religious services weekly in the 1960s. Today, the figure is less than one-third, and it is only one-sixth for people born after 1960.
2. The divorce rate has increased sixfold since the early 1960s, and out-of-marriage births are more common, so children now enjoy less frequent and intimate social interaction with parents and less adult supervision.
3. Since the 1960s, an increasingly large proportion of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals have come "out of the closet" and are prone to being bullied, terrorized, and socially excluded in school. Consequently, a high proportion of youth suicides are carried out by members of sexual minorities (Carole, 2011).
4. The Canadian government and major Canadian churches did much to destroy the social fabric of Indigenous communities in the twentieth century, resulting in extraordinarily high levels of unemployment, substance abuse, cultural disorientation, and suicide (see Box 1.1 and Chapter 10, Race and Ethnicity). Today, Indigenous youth suffer from an extraordinarily high rate of suicide.

In sum, the figures cited above suggest that the level of social solidarity is now lower than it was just a few decades ago, especially for young people. Less firmly rooted in society, and less likely to share moral standards, young people in Canada today are more likely than they were half a century ago to take their own lives if they happen to find themselves in deep personal crisis.

Strong social bonds decrease the probability that a person will die by suicide when adversity strikes.

Dragon Images/Shutterstock

From Personal Troubles to Social Structures

You have long been aware that you live in a society. But until now, you may not have fully understood that society also lives in you. In other words, patterns of social relations influence your thoughts and feelings, affect your behaviour, and therefore help shape who you are.

BOX 1.1 Social Policy

SUICIDE AND THE INNU OF LABRADOR

The suicide rate among the Métis is 1.8 times the rate for non-Indigenous Canadians; among First Nations, it is 3.0 times the rate; and among the Inuit, it is 9.0 times the rate (Statistics Canada, 2019c). However, the Innu of Labrador, a First Nations people, are perhaps the most suicide-prone people in the world. Among the Innu, the suicide rate is nearly 13 times the rate for all Canadians (Rogan, 2001; Samson, Wilson, and Mazower, 1999).

Durkheim's theory of suicide helps explain the Innu people's tragic propensity to suicide. Since the mid-1950s, the Innu's traditional norms and values have been destroyed. Moreover, the Innu were prevented from participating in stable and meaningful patterns of social interaction. In other words, social solidarity among the Innu has been cut to an abysmally low level.

How did this happen? Historically, the Innu were a nomadic people who relied on hunting and trapping for their livelihood. However, in the mid-1950s, shortly after Newfoundland and Labrador became part of Canada, the provincial and federal governments were eager to gain more control of traditional Innu land to encourage economic development. Government officials reasoned that to accommodate new roads, mines, lumber operations, hydroelectric projects, and low-level flight-training facilities for NATO air forces, the Innu would need to be concentrated in settlements. Furthermore, government officials believed that, to function in these new settlements, the Innu would need to learn practical and cultural skills associated with a modern industrial society. Consequently, governments put tremendous pressure on the Innu to give up their traditional way of life and settle in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu.

In the new communities, Canadian laws, schools, and churches strongly discouraged the Innu from hunting, practising their religion, and raising their children in the traditional way. For example, Canadian hunting regulations limited Innu access to their age-old livelihood. Priests are known to have beaten children who missed church or school to go hunting, thus introducing interpersonal violence in a culture that formerly knew none. Teachers introduced North American and European skills and culture, often denigrating Innu practices. At the same time, few alternative jobs existed in the new communities. Most Innu wound up living in despair and on welfare. In the absence of work and lacking the stabilizing influence of their traditional culture, a people long known for their nonviolence and cooperative spirit became victims of widespread family breakdown, sexual abuse, drunkenness, and alcohol-related illness. In Sheshatshiu in 2001, at least 20 percent of the children regularly got high by sniffing gasoline. In Davis Inlet, the figure was nearly 60 percent.

The Canadian Press/Ryan Remiorz

Sniffing gasoline in Davis Inlet

In 2002, the federal and provincial governments decided to move the people of Davis Inlet, creating a safer community for them in Natuashish, 15 km away. The new community voted to abolish alcohol in 2008, but it is still smuggled into town, where a bottle of rye can sell for $350. Some local mothers openly denounce people who supply alcohol and drugs, but substance abuse is still widespread and anti-abolitionists may still be found in the local government (Moore, 2010). In Sheshatshiu, little has changed over the past couple of decades. In October 2019, the community of fewer than 1300 people declared a suicide crisis after 10 suicide attempts were reported within a few days (CBC News, 2019a).

What can be done about the tragedy of the Innu? A 1984 study showed that a movement among the Innu to return to the land and to traditional hunting practices for up to seven months a year led to a dramatic improvement in health. Participants in the movement led a vigorous outdoor life. Alcohol abuse stopped. Diet improved. Their emotional and social environments stabilized and became meaningful. Suicide was unknown (Samson, Wilson, and Mazower, 1999: 25).

However, it is doubtful that most Innu want to return to their traditional lifestyle. And even if they did, a big political obstacle would stand in their way: The governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador would not allow it. A widespread Innu return to the land would conflict with government and private economic development plans. For instance, the Lower Churchill Project (the second-biggest hydroelectric project in the world) and the Voisey's Bay nickel mine (the world's biggest deposit of nickel) are located in the middle of traditional Innu hunting and burial grounds.

The Innu are vigorously attempting to regain control of their land. They also want to be able to decide on their own when and how to use Canadian health services, training facilities, and the like. Whether some compromise can be worked out between government and private plans for economic development and the continuity of the Innu people is unclear. What is clear is that, as a Canadian citizen, the outcome is partly your choice.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways have European colonization and settlement been responsible for the plight of the Innu people?
2. Public opinion polls show that most Canadians tend to blame Indigenous Canadians themselves for their own problems. Why?

As we have seen, one such pattern of social relations is the level of social solidarity characteristic of the various groups to which you belong.

Sociologists call relatively stable patterns of social relations **social structures**. One of the main goals for sociologists is to identify and explain how an individual's personal troubles are connected to the social structures in which the individual lives. This task is harder than it may seem at first. In everyday life, we usually see things mainly from our own point of view. Our experiences seem unique to each of us. If we think about them at all, social structures may appear remote and impersonal. To see how social structures influence us, we require sociological training.

Social structures are relatively stable patterns of social relations.

An important step in broadening our sociological awareness involves recognizing that three levels of social structure surround and permeate us. You can think of these structures as concentric circles that radiate outward from individuals.

1. **Microstructures** are patterns of close social relations formed during face-to-face interaction. For example, families, groups of friends, and work associates all form microstructures.

   Understanding the operation of microstructures can be useful. Let's say you are looking for a job. You might think you would do best to ask as many close friends and relatives as possible for leads and contacts. However, sociological research shows that people you know well are likely to know many of the same people. After asking a couple of close connections for help landing a job, you would do better by asking more remote acquaintances for leads and contacts. People to whom you are weakly connected (and who are weakly connected among themselves) are more likely to know different people. Therefore, they will give you more information about job possibilities and ensure that word about your job search spreads farther. You are more likely to find a job faster if you understand "the strength of weak ties" in microstructural settings (Granovetter, 1973).

Microstructures are the patterns of relatively intimate social relations formed during face-to-face interaction. Families, friendship circles, and work associations are examples of microstructures.

2. **Macrostructures** are patterns of social relations that lie outside and above your circle of intimates and acquaintances.[1] Macrostructures include class relations and **patriarchy**, the traditional system of economic and political inequality between women and men in most societies (see Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification).

   Understanding the operation of macrostructures is also useful. Consider, for example, that when a marriage dissolves, partners commonly blame themselves and each other for their troubles. They tend to ignore the fact that, in our society, most married women who work full-time in the paid labour force are responsible for more housework, child care, and care for seniors than their husbands are. In most of Canada and many other countries, governments and businesses support this arrangement insofar as they provide little assistance to families in the form of affordable and accessible daycare facilities, after-school programs for children, and the like. When spouses share domestic responsibilities equally, their marriages tend to be happier and divorce is less likely, but the unequal division of work in the household—an aspect of patriarchy—is a major source of dissatisfaction in marriages, especially in families that cannot afford to buy services privately (Hochschild with Machung, 1989). Rather than explaining marriage breakups solely as the result of conflicting personalities, it is useful to understand how the macrostructure of patriarchy contributes to marital dissatisfaction. Changing that structure can help people to lead happier lives.

Macrostructures are overarching patterns of social relations that lie outside and above a person's circle of intimates and acquaintances. Macrostructures include classes, bureaucracies, and power systems, such as patriarchy.

Patriarchy is the traditional system of economic and political inequality between women and men in most societies.

3. The third level of society that surrounds and permeates us comprises **global structures**. International organizations, patterns of worldwide travel and communication, and economic relations between countries are examples of global structures. Global structures are increasingly important as inexpensive travel and communication allow all parts of the world to become interconnected culturally, economically, and politically.

   Understanding the operation of global structures can be useful, too. For instance, many people are concerned about the world's poor. They donate money to charities to help with famine and disaster relief. They support their government giving aid to poor countries. However, many of these people don't understand that charity and foreign aid alone cannot end world poverty because they cannot overcome the structure of social relations among countries that have created and sustain global inequality.

   As we will see in Chapter 9 (Globalization, Inequality, and Development), Britain, France, and other imperial powers locked some countries into poverty when they

Global structures are patterns of social relations that lie outside and above the national level. They include international organizations, patterns of worldwide travel and communication, and the economic relations between countries.

colonized them between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In the twentieth century, the poor (or "developing") countries borrowed money from these same rich countries and Western banks to pay for airports, roads, harbours, sanitation systems, basic health care, and so on. Today, poor countries pay about seven times as much in interest on those loans as they receive in aid. Thus, it seems that relying exclusively on foreign aid and charity can do little to help solve the problem of world poverty. Understanding how the global structure of international relations created and helps maintain global inequality suggests new policy priorities for helping the world's poor. One such priority might involve campaigning for the cancellation of foreign debt in compensation for past injustices.

These examples show that personal problems are connected to social structures at the micro, macro, and global levels. No matter whether a personal problem consists of finding employment, keeping a marriage together, or determining how to end world hunger, paying attention to its social-structural sources increases our understanding of the problem and indicates possible solutions.

The **sociological imagination** is the quality of mind that enables a person to see the connection between personal troubles and social structures.

The Sociological Imagination

C. Wright Mills (1959) called the ability to see the connection between personal troubles and social structures the **sociological imagination**. The 2019 movie *Joker* illustrates what he meant by the term (see Box 1.2).

BOX 1.2 Sociology and the Media

JOKER (2019)

Arthur Fleck (brilliantly played by Joaquin Phoenix) suffers from pseudobulbar affect, an emotional disturbance caused by brain injury or neurological disorder. Fleck was severely beaten as a child. Since then, he periodically erupts in uncontrollable laughter.

Fleck means "stain" in German and Yiddish. Viewed by others as a stain on society, Fleck is routinely bullied and beaten as an adult. His society, characterized by extreme and growing inequality, cutbacks on social services, and a nasty war of all against all, is a stain on him.

When government budget cuts abruptly discontinue his subsidized therapy sessions, Fleck cracks. Dressing as a clown, he initiates a murderous rampage that includes the shooting of a popular TV talk show host while on the air. The response is overwhelming. Thousands don clown masks and riot in the streets, protesting the conditions of their existence.

Screenplay writers Todd Phillips and Scott Silver are gifted with the sociological imagination. They lead us to conclude that the personal troubles of Fleck and his fellow citizens reflect the uncivil interactions and ineffective institutions—the crumbling micro-level and macrolevel social structures—that diminish them and disintegrate their lives. As Joker says the moment before he pulls the trigger on the talk show host: "What do you get when you cross a mentally ill loner with a society that abandons him and treats him like trash? I'll tell you what you get. You get what you fuckin' deserve."

Ashekman

Street mural, Beirut, Lebanon, October 2019, by Ashekman.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Is the notion that many people would sympathize with the murderous rampage of the Joker credible?
2. If the Joker is a response to societal breakdown, can the same be said of any criminal?

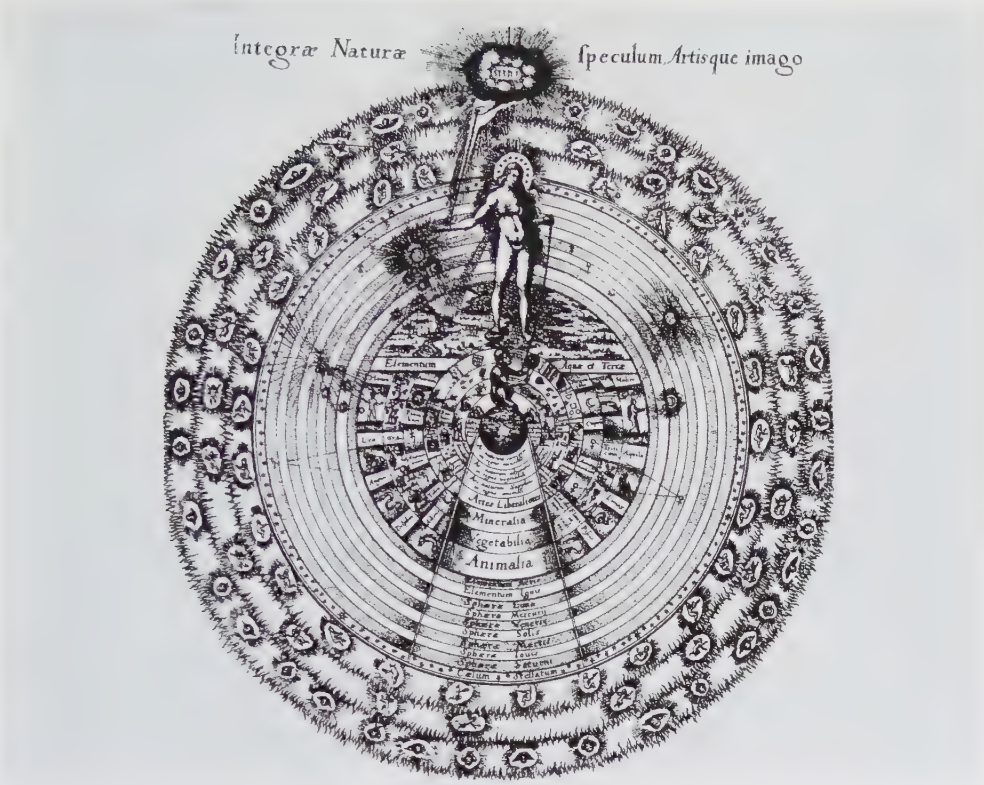


FIGURE 1.4

The European View of the World, about 1600. In Shakespeare's time, most educated Europeans pictured a universe in which God ultimately determines everything. Thus, in this early seventeenth-century engraving, a chain extends from God's hand to the hand of a woman representing Nature; she in turn holds a chain extending to the "ape of Nature," representing humankind. The engraving thus suggests that God and his intermediary, Nature, shape all human actions. Notice also that the engraving arranges all the elements of the universe—angels, heavenly objects, humans, animals, vegetables, minerals—into a hierarchy. It suggests that higher elements, such as the stars and the planets, influence lower elements, such as the fate of humans.

Source: Robert Fludd, *Ultriusque Cosmi Maioris Scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica Atqve Technica Historia* 1617–19. (Oppenheim, Germany. Johann-Theodor de Bry.) (Black-and-white print of the chain of being). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The sociological imagination is a recent addition to the human repertoire. True, in ancient and medieval times, philosophers such as Confucius in China, Ibn Khaldun in Tunisia, and Aristotle in Greece wrote about society. However, their thinking was not sociological; they believed society was controlled by God and nature. They focused on developing blueprints for the ideal society and convincing people to follow those blueprints. As a result, their explanations of how society worked were based on speculation, not evidence (see Figure 1.4).

The Scientific Revolution began about 1550. It encouraged the view that sound conclusions about the workings of society must be based on solid evidence, not just on speculation.

Origins of the Sociological Imagination

The sociological imagination originated in three revolutions that forced people to think about society in new ways:

1. The **Scientific Revolution** began about 1550. It emphasized the belief that we should use evidence, not speculation, to draw conclusions about how society works. The Scientific Revolution is often linked to specific theories, such as Newton's laws of motion and Copernicus's view that Earth revolves around the Sun. However, it is important to keep in mind that science is a method of inquiry, not just a collection of ideas. For example, in 1609, Galileo used a telescope to make careful observations. He concluded that Copernicus's theory was right. This approach illustrates the scientific method: using evidence to test theory. By the mid-seventeenth century, philosophers such as Descartes in France and Hobbes in England were advocating using the scientific method to study society. Commitment to the scientific method became a focus of the sociological imagination when sociology arose as a distinct discipline in the nineteenth century.
2. The **Democratic Revolution** began about 1750. It emphasized that people are responsible for organizing society and that, as a result, social problems can be resolved through human intervention. At the time, most Europeans believed that God shaped the

traveler1116/iStock

The Scientific Revolution began in Europe around 1550. Scientists proposed new theories about the structure of the universe and developed new methods to collect evidence so they could test those theories. Shown here is an astrolabe used by Copernicus to solve problems relating to the position of the Sun, the planets, and the stars.

Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People, July 28, 1830.* The democratic forces unleashed by the French Revolution suggested that people are responsible for organizing society and that human intervention can therefore solve social problems. As such, democracy was a foundation stone of sociology.

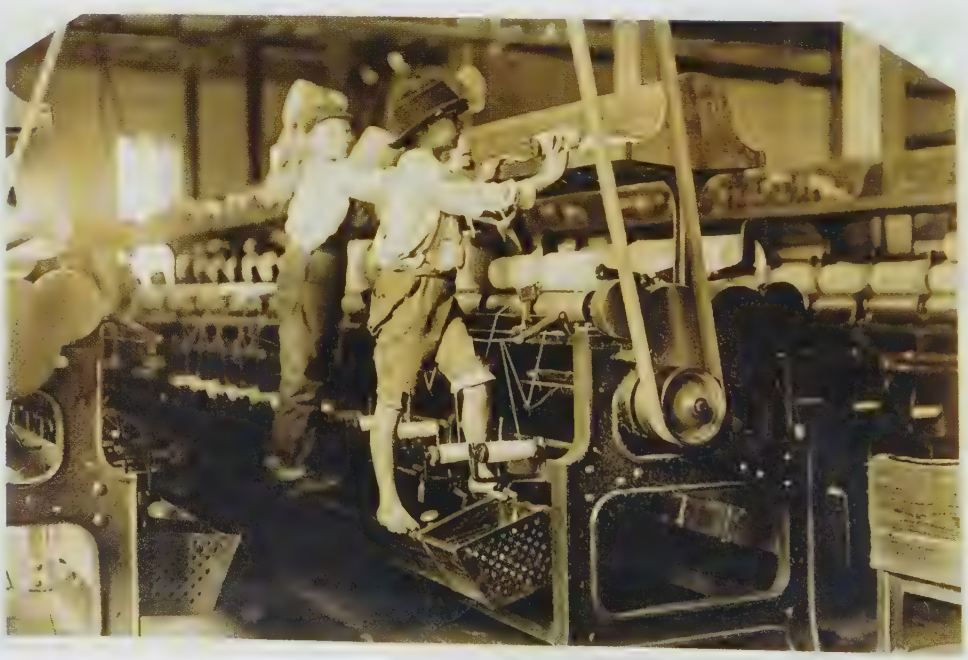
SuperStock/SuperStock

The **Democratic Revolution** began about 1750. It suggested that people are responsible for organizing society and that human intervention can therefore solve social problems.

The **Industrial Revolution**, often regarded as the most important event in world history since the development of agriculture and cities, refers to the rapid economic transformation that began in Britain in the 1780s. It involved the large-scale application of science and technology to industrial processes, the creation of factories, and the formation of a working class.

social order. However, the societal upheaval that resulted from the American Revolution (1775–83) and the French Revolution (1789–99) helped to challenge that idea. It became evident that society could quickly experience enormous change and that *people* control society. The implications for social thought were profound: If people could change society, then they could also use a science of society to help them improve it. The democratic revolutions thus helped to support the idea that a science of society was possible.

3. The **Industrial Revolution** began about 1780. It created a wide range of new social problems for social thinkers to focus on. As industry grew, many people moved



Spinning mill, Macon, Georgia, 1909. The first Industrial Revolution began in the late eighteenth century. The so-called Second Industrial Revolution began in the early twentieth century. Wealthy entrepreneurs formed large companies. Steel became a basic industrial material. Oil and electricity fuelled much industrial production. At the same time, Henry Ford's assembly lines and other mass-production technologies transformed the workplace. Child labour was less extensive than during the First Industrial Revolution, but it was not uncommon.

National Child Labor Committee collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. LC-DIG-nclc-01581

from the countryside to the city, where they worked long hours in crowded and dangerous factories. They lost faith in their religions, battled faceless bureaucracies, and reacted to the filth and poverty of their lives with strikes, crime, revolutions, and wars. This wide range of social problems created a kind of sociological research lab. The Scientific Revolution suggested that it was possible to have a science of society. The Democratic Revolution suggested that people could improve society. The Industrial Revolution gave social thinkers a wide range of important social problems that demanded solutions. In response, the sociological imagination was born.

Theories, Research, Values

French social thinker Auguste Comte (1798–1857) introduced the term *sociology* in 1838 (Thompson, 1975). He tried to place the study of society on scientific foundations. Comte said he wanted to understand the social world as it was, not as he or anyone else imagined it should be. Yet there was a tension in his work. Although he was eager to adopt the scientific method in studying society, he was a conservative thinker, motivated by strong opposition to rapid change in French society. This inclination was evident in his writings. When he moved from his small, conservative hometown to Paris, Comte witnessed the democratic forces unleashed by the French Revolution, the early industrialization of society, and the rapid growth of cities. What he saw shocked and saddened him. Rapid social change was destroying much of what he valued, especially respect for traditional authority. He therefore urged slow change and the preservation of all that was traditional in social life. Thus, scientific methods of research *and* a vision of the ideal society were evident in sociology at its origins.

Although he praised the value of scientific methods, Comte never conducted any research. Neither did the second founder of sociology, British social theorist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). However, Spencer believed that he had discovered scientific laws governing the operation of society. Strongly influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, he thought that societies evolve in the same way biological species do. Individuals struggle to survive, the unfit die before they can bear offspring, and the fittest survive. According to Spencer, an analogous process allows "barbaric" societies to become "civilized." Deep social inequalities exist in society, but that is just as it should be if societies are to evolve, Spencer argued (1975 [1897–1906]).

Spencer's ideas, which came to be known as "social Darwinism," were popular for a time in North America and Great Britain. Wealthy industrialists, such as oil baron John D. Rockefeller, found much to admire in a doctrine that justified social inequality. They trumpeted the superiority of the wealthy and the powerful. Today, few sociologists think that societies are like biological systems. We have a better understanding of the complex economic, political, military, religious, and other forces that cause social change. We appreciate that people can take things into their own hands and change their social environment in ways that no other species can. Spencer remains of interest because he was among the first social thinkers to assert that society operates according to scientific laws—and because his vision of the ideal society nonetheless showed through in his writings.

To varying degrees, we see the same tension between belief in the importance of science and a vision of the ideal society in the work of the three giants in the early history of sociology: Karl Marx (1818–83), Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), and Max Weber (pronounced VAY-ber; 1864–1920). The lives of these three men spanned just over a century. They witnessed Europe's wrenching transition to industrial capitalism. They wanted to explain the great transformation of Europe and suggest ways of improving people's lives. They adopted scientific research methods in their work, but they also wanted to chart a better course for their societies. The ideas they developed are not just diagnostic tools from which we can still learn but, like many sociological ideas, also prescriptions for combating social ills.

The tension between analysis and ideal, diagnosis and prescription is evident throughout sociology. This tension becomes clear when we distinguish three important terms: theories, research, and values.

Theories

Theories are tentative explanations of some aspect of social life that state how and why certain facts are related.

Sociological ideas are usually expressed in the form of theories. **Theories** are tentative explanations of some aspect of social life. They state how and why certain facts are related. For instance, in his theory of suicide, Durkheim related facts about suicide rates to facts about social solidarity, which enabled him to explain suicide as a function of social solidarity. In our broad definition, even a hunch qualifies as a theory if it suggests how and why certain facts are related (Einstein, 1954: 270). Theories are useful insofar as they guide research, telling us what to look for and how facts might be related. They thus help to broaden knowledge and solve social problems.

Research

Research is the process of systematically observing reality to assess the validity of a theory.

After sociologists formulate theories, they can conduct research. **Research** is the process of systematically observing social reality, often to test a theory or assess its validity. For example, Durkheim collected suicide statistics from various government agencies to see whether the data supported or contradicted his theory. Because research can call a theory's validity into question, theories are only *tentative* explanations. We discuss the research process in detail in Chapter 2, How Sociologists Do Research.

Values

Values are ideas about what is good and bad, right and wrong.

Before sociologists can formulate a theory, they must make certain judgments. For example, they must decide which problems are worth studying. They must make certain assumptions about how the parts of society fit together. If they are going to recommend ways of improving the operation of some aspect of society, they must even have an opinion about what the ideal society should look like. Sociologists' values shape these issues. **Values** are ideas about what is good and bad, right and wrong. Inevitably, values help sociologists formulate and favour certain theories over others (Edel, 1965; Kuhn, 1970 [1962]). As such, sociological theories may be modified and even rejected because of research, but they are often motivated by sociologists' values.

Durkheim, Marx, and Weber stood close to the origins of the major theoretical traditions in sociology: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. A fourth theoretical tradition, feminism, has arisen in recent decades to correct some deficiencies in the three long-established traditions. It will become clear as you read this book that many more theories exist in addition to these four. However, because these four traditions have been especially influential in the development of sociology, we now present a thumbnail sketch of each one.

Time for Review

- How does the sociological study of suicide show that a distinctively *social* realm influences all human behaviour, even if the behaviour seems non-social or antisocial?
- What are microstructures, macrostructures, and global structures?
- How did the Scientific Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the Democratic Revolution influence the emergence of sociology?
- What is the relationship among theories, research, and values?

Sociological Theory and Theorists

Functionalism

DURKHEIM

Émile Durkheim's theory of suicide is an early example of what sociologists now call **functionalism**. Functionalist theories incorporate the following features:

1. They stress that relatively stable patterns of social relations, or social structures, govern human relations. For example, Durkheim emphasized how patterns of social solidarity influence suicide rates. Macrostructures are typically the social structures analyzed by functionalists.
2. Functionalist theories show how social structures maintain or undermine social stability. For example, Durkheim analyzed how the growth of industries and cities in nineteenth-century Europe lowered the level of social solidarity and contributed to social instability, which led, among other results, to a higher suicide rate.
3. Functionalist theories emphasize that social structures are based mainly on shared values. Thus, when Durkheim wrote about social solidarity, he sometimes meant the frequency and intensity of social interaction, but more often he thought of social solidarity as a sort of moral cement that binds people together.
4. Functionalism suggests that re-establishing equilibrium can best solve most social problems. For instance, Durkheim said that social stability could be restored in late nineteenth-century Europe by creating new associations of employers and workers that would lower workers' expectations about what they could get out of life. If, said Durkheim, more people could agree on wanting less, then social solidarity would rise, resulting in fewer suicides, fewer strikes, and so on. Functionalism, then, was a conservative response to widespread social unrest in late nineteenth-century France. A more liberal or radical response might have argued that if people are expressing discontent because they are getting less out of life than they expect, then discontent can be lowered by figuring out how they can get more out of life.

FUNCTIONALISM IN NORTH AMERICA

Functionalist thinking influenced North American sociology at the end of the nineteenth century, but it was only during the continent's greatest economic crisis ever, the Great Depression of 1929–39, that functionalism took deep root here (Russett, 1966). With a quarter of the paid labour force unemployed and labour unrest rising, sociologists with a conservative frame of mind were, unsurprisingly, attracted to a theory focusing on the restoration of social equilibrium. Functionalist theory remained popular for about 30 years. It experienced a minor revival in the early 1990s but never regained the dominance it enjoyed from the 1930s to the early 1960s.

Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons was the foremost North American proponent of functionalism. Parsons is best known for identifying how various institutions must work to ensure the smooth operation of society as a whole. He argued that societies function best when families effectively raise new generations, the military successfully defends society against external threats, schools teach students the skills and values they need to become productive adults, and religions help people share a moral code (Parsons, 1951).

Parsons was criticized for exaggerating the degree to which members of society share common values and social institutions contribute to social harmony. This criticism led North America's other leading functionalist, Robert Merton, to propose that social structures may have different consequences for different groups of people, and that some consequences may be disruptive or **dysfunctional** (Merton, 1968 [1949]). Moreover, said Merton, while some functions are **manifest** (visible and intended), others are **latent** (invisible and unintended). For example, a manifest function of schools is to transmit skills from one generation to the next, while a latent function of schools is to encourage the development of a separate youth culture that is often in conflict with parents and other adults (Coleman, 1961; Hersch, 1998).

Photo courtesy of Ed Clark

S. D. Clark (1910–2003) received his PhD from the University of Toronto and later became that institution's first Chair of the Department of Sociology. Born in Lloydminster, Alberta, he became known for his studies of Canadian social development as a process of disorganization and reorganization on a series of economic frontiers, a prominent theme in *The Developing Canadian Community* (1968) and other works. The influence of functionalism on his work is apparent in his emphasis on the way society re-establishes equilibrium after experiencing disruptions caused by economic change.

Functionalism stresses that human behaviour is governed by relatively stable social structures. It underlines how social structures maintain or undermine social stability, emphasizes that social structures are based mainly on shared values or preferences, and suggests that re-establishing equilibrium can best solve most social problems.

Dysfunctional consequences are effects of social structures that create social instability.

Manifest functions are obvious and intended effects of social structures.

Latent functions are nonobvious and unintended effects of social structures.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory generally focuses on macrolevel or global structures and shows how major patterns of inequality in society produce social stability in some circumstances and social change in others.

The second major theoretical tradition in sociology emphasizes the centrality of conflict in social life. **Conflict theory** incorporates the following features:

- It generally focuses on macrolevel or global structures, such as relations between classes, that is, patterns of domination, submission, and struggle between people of different economic standing.
- It shows how major patterns of inequality in society produce social stability in some circumstances and social change in others.
- It stresses how members of privileged groups try to maintain their advantages while subordinate groups struggle to increase theirs. In other words, social conditions at a particular time are the result of an ongoing power struggle between privileged and subordinate groups.
- It typically leads to the view that eliminating privilege will lower the level of conflict and increase the sum total of human welfare.

MARX

Class conflict is the struggle between classes to resist and overcome the opposition of other classes.

Conflict theory originated in the work of Karl Marx. In the mid-nineteenth century, Marx proposed a sweeping argument about the way societies develop (Marx, 1904 [1859]; Marx and Engels, 1972 [1848]). His theory was radically different from Durkheim's. At the centre of Marx's ideas is the notion of **class conflict**, the struggle between classes to resist and overcome the opposition of other classes.

Marx argued that owners of industry are eager to improve the way work is organized and to adopt new tools, machines, and production methods. These innovations allow them to produce more efficiently, earn higher profits, and drive inefficient competitors out of business. However, the drive for profits also causes capitalists to concentrate workers in larger and larger establishments, keep wages as low as possible, and invest as little as possible in improving working conditions. Thus, said Marx, a large and growing class of poor workers opposes a small and shrinking class of wealthy owners.

Marx held that workers would ultimately become aware of belonging to the same exploited class. Their sense of "class consciousness," he wrote, would encourage the growth of working-class organizations, such as trade unions and labour parties. These organizations would eventually seek to end private ownership of property and replace it with a communist system in which everyone shared property and wealth—"from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (Marx, 1875).

Carleton University Archives

John Porter (1921–79) was Canada's premier sociologist in the 1960s and 1970s. Born in Vancouver, he received his PhD from the London School of Economics and spent his academic career at Carleton University in Ottawa. His major work, *The Vertical Mosaic* (1965), is a study of class and power in Canada. Firmly rooted in conflict theory, the book influenced a generation of Canadian sociologists in their studies on social inequality, elite groups, French–English relations, and Canadian–American relations.

WEBER

Marx's predictions about the inevitable collapse of capitalism are now largely discredited. Max Weber, a German sociologist who wrote his major works a generation after Marx, was among the first to find flaws in Marx's argument (Weber, 1946). Weber noted the rapid growth of the "service" sector of the economy with its many non-manual workers and professionals. He argued that many members of these occupational groups stabilize society because they enjoy higher status and income than do manual workers in the manufacturing sector. In addition, Weber showed that class conflict is not the only driving force of history. In his view, politics and religion are also important sources of historical change. Other writers pointed out that Marx did not understand how investing in technology would make it possible for workers to toil fewer hours under less oppressive conditions. Nor did he foresee that higher wages, better working conditions, and welfare state benefits would help to pacify manual workers.

CONFLICT THEORY IN NORTH AMERICA

Conflict theory had some advocates in North America before the 1960s. Most noteworthy is C. Wright Mills, who laid the foundation for modern conflict theory in the 1950s. Mills conducted pioneering research on US politics and class structure. One of his most important books is *The Power Elite*, a study of the several hundred men who occupied the "command

posts" of the American economy, military, and government. He argued that power is highly concentrated in American society, which is therefore less of a democracy than we are often led to believe (Mills, 1956).

Exceptions like Mills notwithstanding, conflict theory did not really take hold in North America until the 1960s, a decade rocked by growing labour unrest, Québec separatism, anti-Vietnam War protests, the rise of the Black Power movement, and the revival of feminism, which had fallen dormant after its first stirrings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Strikes, demonstrations, and riots were almost daily occurrences in the 1960s and early 1970s, so many sociologists of that era considered conflict among classes, nations, races, and generations to be the very essence of society.

THE CULTURAL TURN AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM: GRAMSCI AND FOUCAULT

In the 1960s and 1970s, conflict theory took what has been called a "cultural turn." Increasingly, conflict theorists directed their attention to the ways in which language, music, literature, fashion, movies, advertising, and other elements of culture express domination by the powerful and resistance by others.

The origins of a cultural approach to the study of social conflict are found in essays written in the early twentieth century by Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (pronounced GRAM-shee). In Gramsci's view, ruling classes establish their dominance partly by controlling jobs, using force, and the like. However, they also exercise power in softer ways. In particular, they fund the development, transmission, and learning of ideas that seem to embody the values of everyone but are actually biased in favour of upper-class dominance. Gramsci wrote that **cultural hegemony** exists when these values become so deeply entrenched that the great majority of people accept them as common sense (Gramsci, 1957, 1971). Subordinate classes can resist cultural hegemony, Gramsci wrote, but only if they develop ideas and institutions that express and support their own cultural preferences. Later writers extended Gramsci's argument to include dominant, taken-for-granted ideas about race, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on. (For more on how cultural hegemony works, see Chapter 13, Political Economy).

Cultural hegemony involves the control of a culture by dominant classes and other groups to the point where their values are universally accepted as common sense.

In France, from the 1950s to the 1980s, Michel Foucault (pronounced Foo-KŌ) further developed the notion that culture is the site of ongoing conflict between dominant and subordinate classes and other groups. Foucault made his case by studying new forms of regulation that accompany capitalist industrialization. He showed that, as the goal of maximizing economic productivity grows in importance, criminals, people with physical infirmities, people with mental illness, and ordinary students and workers are subjected to new structures of control in prisons, hospitals, institutions for the mentally ill, workplaces, schools, and universities. According to Foucault (1973, 1977, 1988), modern institutions sometimes use violence to regulate behaviour, but they more often rely on new technologies and the *internalization* of control mechanisms. For example, modern institutions are physically, technologically, and socially designed so that authorities can easily observe the behaviour of inmates, patients, workers, and students. Authorities may not always watch their "clientele," but when inmates and others know that they *may* be under the watchful eye of authorities, they usually act as if they *are* being observed. Before capitalist industrialization, control took place almost exclusively through force, but now more subtle and effective mechanisms of regulation are employed.

According to Foucault, power is exercised in every social interaction, but every social interaction is also subject to resistance by subordinates. Thus, the exercise of power is unstable. Dominant groups and individuals must continuously renew their power relations to maintain control, but sometimes they fail, providing subordinates with the opportunity to assert their interests.

Foucault was part of a movement in French social thought known as **poststructuralism**. Earlier social thinkers had argued that social relations and cultures form structures, or stable determinants of the way people think and act. These "structuralists" typically categorized elements of social relations and of culture as binary opposites: male versus female, civilized versus uncivilized people, Black versus White races, and so on (Derrida, 2004: 41).

Poststructuralism, a school of thought that originated in mid-twentieth-century France, denied the stability of social relations and of cultures, their capacity to always shape how people think and act, and their neat categorization of social and cultural elements as binary opposites.

In contrast, poststructuralists, Foucault among them, denied the stability of social relations and of cultures, their capacity always to shape how people think and act, and their neat categorization of social and cultural elements as binary opposites. According to the poststructuralists, the social world is a more fluid and complex place, and people are more often the agents of their own destiny than structuralists imagined.

To better understand these ideas, consider that many of us casually use the term *the opposite sex* in everyday speech without giving it much thought. Yet embedded in this term is a faulty set of assumptions based on a distribution of power that favours some categories of people at the expense of others. As you will learn in Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification, it is factually incorrect to assume that men and women are opposites in their sexual identities, preferences, and behaviours. It is more accurate to say that men and women are arrayed along one scale with respect to their sexual identities, a second scale with respect to their sexual preferences, and a third scale with respect to their sexual behaviours; and their positions on these scales can change in different circumstances. When we perceive men as remaining clustered on one extreme of a single scale and women on the other extreme—when we view women and men as fixed "opposites"—we oversimplify the complexity of real flesh-and-blood people. We also ignore that many women and men are not so neatly pigeonholed. People who are not included in the conventional categorization are simply defined out of existence by our casual use of language and the underlying fact that some people have more power than others to name things.

Foucault's influence, and that of other poststructuralists, spans many areas of contemporary sociology. Foucault's ideas will be taken up again in Chapter 7, Deviance and Crime; Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification; and Chapter 12, The Body and Health: Disability, Aging, and Death. We will also come across Foucault's influence when we discuss the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in Chapter 8, Social Stratification, and Chapter 16, Education. Finally, we will encounter the legacy of poststructuralism when we review postcolonial theory in Chapter 9, Globalization, Inequality, and Development, and critical race theory in Chapter 10, Race and Ethnicity.

Symbolic Interactionism

WEBER, MEAD, AND GOFFMAN

As noted earlier, Weber criticized Marx's interpretation of the rise of capitalism. He argued that the development of capitalism was a result not only of favourable economic circumstances, but of certain *religious* beliefs that encouraged vigorous capitalist growth (Weber, 1958 [1904–5]). Weber showed that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestants believed their religious doubts could be reduced, and a state of grace assured, if they worked diligently and lived simply. This belief, which Weber called the **Protestant ethic**, had the unintended effect of increasing savings and investment.

The Protestant ethic is the belief that religious doubts can be reduced, and a state of grace ensured, if people work diligently and live simply. According to Weber, the Protestant ethic had the unintended effect of increasing savings and investment, thus stimulating capitalist growth.

According to Weber, capitalism developed most robustly where the Protestant ethic took hold. Similarly, in much of his research, Weber emphasized the importance of empathically understanding people's motives and the meanings they attach to things to gain a clear sense of the significance of their actions. He called this aspect of his approach to sociological research the method of *Verstehen* ("understanding" in German).

The idea that any complete sociological analysis requires the analysis of subjective meanings and motives was only one of Weber's contributions to early sociological theory. Weber was also an important conflict theorist, as you will learn in later chapters. However, it is enough to note here that his emphasis on subjective meanings found rich soil in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His ideas resonated deeply with the individualism of American culture and the widely held belief that talent and initiative could enable anyone to achieve just about anything. Much of early American sociology focused on the individual or, more precisely, on the connection between the individual and the larger society.

This connection was the focus of sociologists at the University of Chicago, the most influential sociology department in North America before World War II. For example, the

University of Chicago's George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) focused on how a person's sense of self is formed through interaction with other people. According to Mead, we learn who we are by taking the role of other people as we interact with them and by seeing ourselves as they see us. The work of Mead and his colleagues gave birth to symbolic interactionism, a distinctively American theoretical tradition that continues to be a major force in sociology today.

Functionalist and conflict theories assume that people's group memberships—whether people are rich or poor, male or female, black or white, and so on—influence their behaviour. This approach can sometimes make people seem like balls on a pool table: They get knocked around and cannot choose their own destinies. However, we know from our everyday experience that people are not like that. We often make choices, sometimes difficult ones. We sometimes change our minds. Moreover, two people with similar group memberships may react differently to similar social circumstances because they interpret those circumstances differently.

Recognizing these issues, some sociologists focus on the subjective side of social life. They work in the symbolic interactionist tradition. **Symbolic interactionism** incorporates these features:

- It focuses on interpersonal communication, or interaction in microlevel social settings. This feature distinguishes it from both functionalist and conflict theories.
- Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that an adequate explanation of social behaviour requires understanding the subjective meanings people attach to their social circumstances.
- Symbolic interactionism stresses that people help to create their social circumstances and do not merely react to them. For example, Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman (1922–82), one of the most influential symbolic interactionists, studied the variety of ways individuals present themselves to others in everyday life to appear in the best possible light. Goffman considered social interaction as a carefully staged play that includes a front stage, a back stage, defined roles, and a variety of props. In this play, individual characteristics, such as age, gender, and race, may help to shape a person's actions, but there is also ample room for individual creativity and choice (Goffman, 1959).
- By underscoring the subjective meanings people create in small social settings, symbolic interactionists validate unpopular and non-official viewpoints, thus increasing our understanding and tolerance of people who may be different from us.

American Sociological Association

Erving Goffman (1922–82) was born in Mannville, Alberta. He studied sociology and anthropology at the University of Toronto. He completed his PhD at the University of Chicago and pursued his academic career at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Pennsylvania. Goffman developed an international reputation for his "dramaturgical" approach to symbolic interactionism. Perhaps his most influential work is *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959).

Symbolic interactionism focuses on interaction in microlevel social settings and emphasizes that an adequate explanation of social behaviour requires understanding of the subjective meanings people attach to their social circumstances.

To understand symbolic interactionism better, let us briefly return to the problem of suicide. If a police officer discovers a dead person at the wheel of a car that has run into a tree, it may be difficult to establish whether the death was an accident or suicide. Interviewing friends and relatives to discover the driver's state of mind just before the crash may help rule out the possibility of suicide. As this example illustrates, understanding the intention or motive of the actor is critical to understanding the meaning of a social action and explaining it. A state of mind must be interpreted, usually by a coroner, before a dead body becomes a suicide statistic (Douglas, 1967).

For surviving family and friends, suicide is always painful and sometimes embarrassing. Insurance policies often deny payment to beneficiaries in the case of suicide. As a result, coroners are inclined to classify deaths as accidental whenever such an interpretation is plausible. Being human, they want to minimize a family's suffering after such a horrible event. Sociologists therefore believe that official suicide rates are about one-third lower than actual suicide rates.

We discuss symbolic interactionism's contribution to sociology in Chapter 4, Socialization; Chapter 14, Families; Chapter 17, Mass and Social Media; Chapter 18, Collective Action and Social Movements; and elsewhere.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND QUEER THEORY

Social constructionism is a variant of symbolic interactionism that has become popular in recent years. Social constructionists argue that when people interact, they typically assume things are naturally or innately what they seem to be. But in reality, apparently natural or innate features of life are sustained by *social* processes that vary historically and culturally (Hannigan, 1995a).

Social constructionism argues that apparently natural or innate features of life are often sustained by social processes that vary historically and culturally.

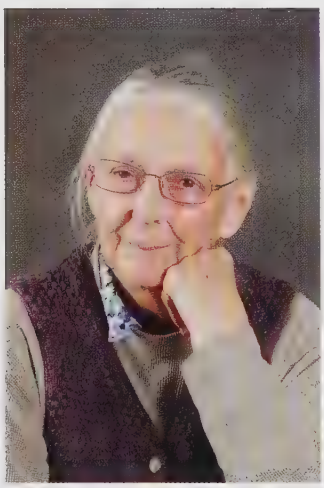
For example, many people assume that differences in the way women and men behave are the result of their different biological makeup. In contrast, social constructionists show

that many of the presumably natural differences between women and men depend on the way power is distributed between them and the degree to which certain ideas about women and men are shared (see Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Since power distributions and ideas about gender vary over time and place, social constructionists are able to show how changing social conditions produce changes in the way people act out their gender identity. They conclude that gender is more a performance shaped by social conditions than part of a person's essence. People usually do such a good job of building natural-seeming identities in their everyday interactions—not just gender but also ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and so on—that they do not notice the materials used in the construction process. Social constructionists identify those materials and analyze how people piece them together.

Queer theory argues that people's sexual identities and performances are so variable that such conventional labels as *male*, *female*, gay, and *lesbian* fail to capture the sexual instability that characterizes the lives of many people.

Queer theory takes the social constructionist argument a step further by denying the very existence of stable identities (Green, 2007). From the queer theorist's point of view, when we apply such labels as *male*, *female*, *gay*, and *lesbian* to ourselves or others, we are adopting socially accepted labels that fail to capture the fluidity and variability of people's actual identities and performances. Such labels impose social conventions on people, thus acting as forms of control and domination and drawing attention away from the uniqueness of each individual (for more on queer theory, see Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification).

In sum, the study of the subjective side of social life helps to take us beyond the official picture by deepening our understanding of how society works and supplementing the insights gained from macrolevel analysis.



Courtesy of Dorothy E Smith

Dorothy Smith (1926–) was born in England and took her PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. She has held academic positions at the University of British Columbia, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and the University of Victoria. She is internationally known for developing standpoint theory. The theory emphasizes the chasm separating the worldviews of subordinate groups (notably women and racial minorities) from the worldviews of dominant groups (notably men and racial majorities). Standpoint theory has encouraged many researchers to demonstrate the way in which subordinate groups, obliged to work and study in hierarchically organized institutions, come to feel marginalized and alienated. Among Smith's most influential works is *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (2012).

Feminist Theory

Few women played a prominent role in the early history of sociology. The strict demands placed on women by the nineteenth-century household and the lack of opportunity outside the household prevented most of them from obtaining a higher education and finding work that could support sociological research. Not surprisingly, therefore, the women who did make their mark on the discipline in its early years had unusual backgrounds. These exceptional people introduced into the discipline gender issues that were largely ignored by Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Appreciation for the sociological contribution of these pioneering women has grown in recent years as concern with gender issues has come to form a substantial part of the sociological enterprise.

MARTINEAU AND ADDAMS

Harriet Martineau (1802–76) is often called the first female sociologist. Born in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century to a prosperous family, she never married and was able to support herself comfortably from her journalistic writings. Martineau translated Comte into English. She undertook critical studies of slavery and factory laws. She also wrote about gender inequality and was a leading advocate of voting rights and higher education for women, as well as gender equality in the family. As such, Martineau was one of the first feminists (Yates, 1985).

In the early twentieth century, a few women from wealthy American families attended university, trained as sociologists, and wanted to become professors of sociology. However, they were refused faculty appointments. As a result, they often turned to social activism and social work. For example, Jane Addams (1860–1935) co-founded Hull House, a shelter for homeless people in Chicago's slums. She spent her life fighting for social reform and provided an opportunity for sociologists from the University of Chicago to conduct research at Hull House by interviewing clients. Addams received the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her work.

MODERN FEMINISM

Despite its auspicious beginnings, feminist thinking had little impact on sociology until the mid-1960s, when the rise of the modern women's movement drew attention to the many remaining inequalities between women and men. Since then, feminist theory has had such a big

influence on sociology that it may now fairly be regarded as sociology's fourth major theoretical tradition. Several variants of modern feminism exist (see Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification). However, the various strands of **feminist theory** share the following features:

- Feminist theory focuses on various aspects of patriarchy, the system of male domination in society. Patriarchy, feminists contend, is at least as important as class inequality in determining a person's opportunities in life, and perhaps more so.
- Feminist theory holds that male domination and female subordination are determined not by biological necessity but by structures of power and social convention. From their point of view, women are subordinate to men only because men enjoy more legal, economic, political, and cultural rights.
- Feminist theory examines the operation of patriarchy in both micro and macro settings.
- Feminist theory contends that existing patterns of gender inequality can and should be changed for the benefit of all members of society. From this point of view, differences in the way boys and girls are brought up; barriers to equal opportunity in education, paid work, and politics; and the unequal division of domestic responsibilities between women and men are among the main sources of gender inequality.

Feminist theory, for the most part, claims that patriarchy is at least as important as class inequality in determining a person's opportunities in life. It holds that male domination and female subordination are determined not by biological necessity but by structures of power and social convention. It examines the operation of patriarchy in both micro and macro settings. And it contends that existing patterns of gender inequality can and should be changed for the benefit of all members of society.

As you will see in the following pages, sociologists in Canada and elsewhere have elaborated and refined each of the four main theoretical traditions in sociology. They have applied them to all of the discipline's branches. Today's sociologists may work within only one tradition or may borrow ideas from more than one tradition, but all are deeply indebted to the founders of the discipline.

Time for Review

- What are the key features of the four main theoretical traditions? (Table 1.1 and Figure 1.5 will help you answer this question.)
- What was the "cultural turn" in the conflict tradition?

TABLE 1.1
The Main Theoretical Traditions in Sociology

Theoretical Tradition	Main Level of Analysis	Main Focus	Main Question	Image of Ideal Society
Functionalism	Macro	Values	How do the institutions of society contribute to social stability?	A state of equilibrium
Conflict theory	Macro and global	Class inequality	How do privileged groups seek to maintain their advantages and subordinate groups seek to increase theirs, often causing social change in the process?	The elimination of privilege, especially class privilege
Symbolic interactionism	Micro	Meaning	How do individuals communicate so as to make their social settings meaningful?	Respect for the validity of minority views
Feminist theory	Micro and macro	Patriarchy	Which social structures and interaction processes maintain male dominance and female subordination?	The elimination of gender inequality

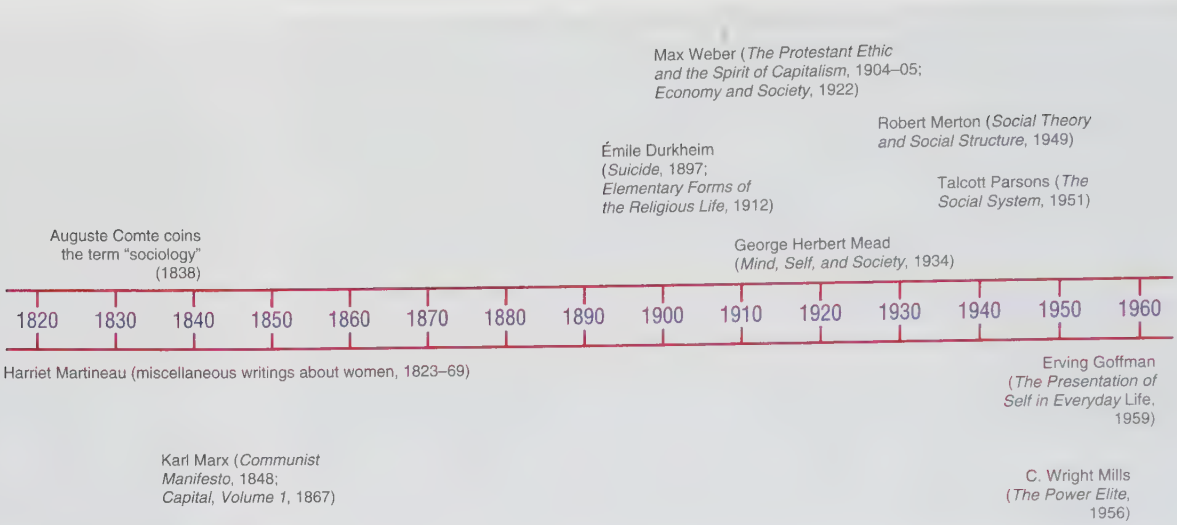

Max Weber (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1904–05; Economy and Society, 1922)
Robert Merton (Social Theory and Social Structure, 1949)
Émile Durkheim (Suicide, 1897; Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, 1912)
Talcott Parsons (The Social System, 1951)
Auguste Comte coins the term "sociology" (1838)
George Herbert Mead (Mind, Self, and Society, 1934)
1820
1830
1840
1850
1860
1870
1880
1890
1900
1910
1920
1930
1940
1950
1960
Harriet Martineau (miscellaneous writings about women, 1823–69)
Erving Goffman (The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, 1959)
Karl Marx (Communist Manifesto, 1848; Capital, Volume 1, 1867)
C. Wright Mills (The Power Elite, 1956)

FIGURE 1.5
A Sociological Timeline of Major Figures in the Development of Sociological Theory, 1820–1960

Dating and Hooking Up from Four Theoretical Perspectives

To illustrate how much farther we are able to see by using theory as our guide, we now consider how the four traditions outlined above improve our understanding of two aspects of social life that are likely familiar to you: dating and hooking up.

If It Feels Good, Do It

In 1969, the Canadian government passed a bill legalizing the birth control pill, "therapeutic" abortion, and acts between consenting same-sex adults. The bill did not create the sexual revolution of the 1960s. It merely brought the law into line with the attitudes and practices of a growing number of Canadians, well summarized by the decade's catchphrase: "If it feels good, do it." For example, premarital sex, once considered taboo, became increasingly acceptable. In a 1975 survey, 38 percent of 18- to-29-year-old Canadians said that premarital sex is "not wrong at all." By 1995, the figure stood at 75 percent (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey, 2019: 112).

Amid liberalizing attitudes toward premarital sex, formal dating declined and hookup culture blossomed. Prearranged movie, party, dance, and restaurant dates leading to intimacy and enduring relationships became less frequent. Brief sexual encounters with no commitment grew in popularity, especially on college and university campuses (Garcia et al., 2012). Katy Perry summarized the scene in her 2011 chart-topping song *Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)*: "There's a stranger in my bed / There's a pounding in my head / . . . I smell like a minibar / . . . Is this a hickey or a bruise?"

A Feminist Interpretation of Hookups

The hookup is sometimes lauded as a practice that, unconstrained by social convention, increases people's freedom and independence. However, feminist sociologists have been quick to interpret the hookup less as a means of sexual liberation than a new form of male heterosexual domination. They assert—and have demonstrated in their research—that by the late twentieth century, hookup culture had become pervasive on college and university campuses, crowding out space for the development of intimate relationships and marginalizing students who felt uncomfortable participating in it. The latter included religious students and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students, the latter of whom

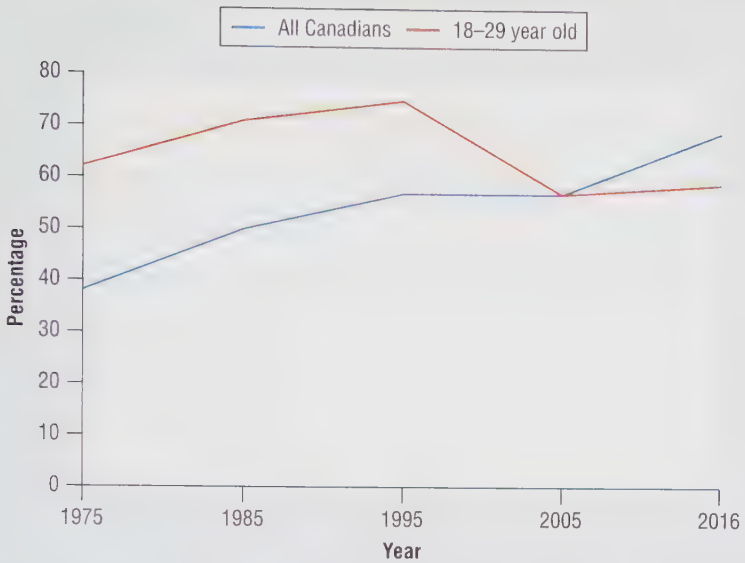


FIGURE 1.6
Belief that premarital sex is "not wrong at all," Canada, 1975–2016 (in percent)

Source: Bibby, Reginald W., Joel Thiessen, and Monetta Bailey. 2019. *The Millennial Mosaic.* Toronto: Dundurn.

tended to be put off by its promotion of exclusively heterosexual encounters. Moreover, by reinforcing the notion that men are entitled to sexual gratification and that women who show interest in men are obliged to do what men want, hookup culture put women at risk for sexual assault and rape. As feminist-inspired research showed, a woman who expressed interest in a man, hooked up with him, but refused to have intercourse with him was at especially high risk of sexual assault (Bogle, 2008; Kelly, 2012; Stepp, 2007). These downsides of hookup culture may have been partly responsible for a surprising tendency: Between 1995 and 2005, the tendency of Canadians between the age of 18 and 29 to believe that premarital sex is "not wrong at all" dropped sharply, and by 2016 was as low as the percentage for all Canadians for the first time (see Figure 1.6).

Freedom of Sexual Expression on the Web: A Symbolic Interactionist View

As hookup culture was becoming pervasive on campus, a second influence on sexual behaviour was evolving online. According to many symbolic interactionists, it greatly increased freedom of expression, including people's freedom to express their sexuality.

The Web went live in 1989. Just seven years later, 40 million people were connected to it worldwide. By 2019, the figure had grown to 4.5 billion (Brym and Lenton, 2001: 5; Internet World Statistics, 2019). This means that nearly 60 percent of the world's population can now interact in real time on a wide variety of online platforms. And they don't need a computer to do it; 2.5 billion people now have smartphones (Pew Research Center, 2019).

In the early years of online communication, most people thought of it only as a means of transmitting information. If they had taken symbolic interactionism to heart, they might have expected something more. The core principles of symbolic interactionism are (1) people see themselves as they are reflected in the eyes of others, and (2) new interactions can result in people revising their self-conceptions. By the mid-1990s, sociologists working in the symbolic interactionist tradition were publishing research demonstrating that people were beginning to think of themselves in new ways as a result of interacting with others on the Web.

Because it enables anonymity, the Web allows people to manipulate the way they present themselves to others. It allows them to interact with fewer inhibitions than face-to-

face interaction allows. And while it connects people over physical distance, it allows them to build trust and meet face-to-face if they want (Lundquist and Curington, 2019).

Because of these features, the Web allows shy people to become emboldened and curious people to meet others with whom they can explore new avenues of experience. These characteristics of online interaction allowed people to start discovering parts of themselves that they formerly suppressed. For instance, we don't know how many LGBTQ+ people have found their way out of the closet with the support of acquaintances and friends they met on the Web, but we do know that this happens (Turkle, 1995). And given the explosive popularity of online dating and hookup platforms—eHarmony, Match, PlentyOfFish, OkCupid, Tinder, Grindr, and all the rest—it seems certain that opportunities for self-modification have multiplied many times over in recent decades, adding weight to the symbolic interactionist view that online interaction provides an alternative to on-campus hookup culture and thus increases freedom of sexual expression.

Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and the Issue of Race

We now turn to the two remaining perspectives on what is happening in the world of dating, one indebted to functionalist theory and the other to conflict theory. They both focus on the issue of race but are diametrically opposed in terms of what they claim is happening.

Offline, members of different racial groups are often kept apart by social and geographical boundaries. Even in the same city, they tend to live in different areas, belong to different religious and other organizations, have different friendship circles, and so on. According to functionalists, such barriers to interaction are largely absent online. Members of different racial groups enjoy more opportunities for friendly interaction than they do offline, increasing the likelihood that they will date and even select marriage partners across racial lines. From this point of view, online dating sites and other platforms for interaction function to lower racial prejudice and animosity in society. Today, well over one-half of all marriages and common law relationships of visible-minority Canadians born in this country involve partners from different visible-minority groups (Alba, 2017: 21). According to functionalists, online dating sites and other platforms help to ensure that this proportion will increase, ushering in a mixed-race future that minimizes social conflict and ensures social equilibrium (Buggs, 2017: 2).

Conflict theorists see things differently. They claim that the Web provides people with new opportunities to identify and associate with people of the *same* race, thus reinforcing racial differences and doing nothing to lower the potential for animosity and conflict in society. This theoretical difference of opinion concerning the racial consequences of online dating can be resolved only by conducting research. And that is just what sociologists have done.

What does the research show? Among other things, it demonstrates that, for heterosexual, gay, and lesbian online daters, Whites are most likely to reject dating non-Whites and to be preferred as dating partners by members of all racial groups. This pattern reinforces White dominance online and in the larger society. Moreover, White men who accept interracial dates are most inclined to do so with Asian women, while White women who accept inter-racial dates are most inclined to do so with Black men. These patterns contribute to racial stereotypes by fetishizing Black male virility and Asian female submissiveness (Bedi, 2015: 1002; Buggs, 2017: 3; Rudder, 2014: 102–9, 243). In short, research suggests that online dating is a site of sexual racism. This finding calls into question the validity of the functionalist theory. It supports the conflict theorists' claim that online dating reinforces racial differences, doing little or nothing to lessen racial animosity and conflict in the larger society.

Theory in Practice

In everyday speech, theories are often characterized as idle speculation divorced from reality. Actually, theory construction is hard work with important practical implications. Theories guide research, telling researchers what to look for and what to expect. Research, in turn, helps to determine which theories are valid and which are not. Without research, theories *would* be idle speculation. Without theories, there would be no reliable scientific knowledge.

Our application of sociology's four main theoretical perspectives to the closely related issues of dating and hookups illustrate how sociologists have used theories in practice. Starting with general principles grounded in feminist, symbolic interactionist, functionalist, and conflict theories, we derived specific ideas about (1) the possible effects of hookup culture and online dating on sexual freedom, and (2) the consequences of online dating for race relations. The feminist theory led us to expect decreasing sexual freedom while the symbolic interactionist theory led us to expect increasing sexual freedom. We cited research that was able to validate both theories because they focus on different areas of social life (campuses versus online) where different tendencies are evident. Meanwhile, the functionalist theory led us to expect that online dating would increase racial harmony while conflict theory led us to expect no such effect. We cited research validating conflict theory and casting doubt on functionalist theory.

You will repeatedly encounter theories in the following pages, most of them derived from the four theoretical perspectives we have highlighted. You will also be introduced to research that will allow you to assess the validity of the theories you encounter. Our brief discussion of sociological research on dating and hookups gives you a taste of what lies ahead.

Time for Review

- Under what circumstances can different theories of the same phenomenon be compatible?
- Under what circumstances can different theories of the same phenomenon be contradictory?
- How can we resolve contradictions between different theories of the same phenomenon?

A Sociological Compass

Our summary of sociology's major theoretical perspectives suggests that the discipline's creators developed their ideas as a way of solving the great sociological puzzle of their time: the causes and consequences of the Industrial Revolution. This observation leads to two interesting questions: What are today's great sociological puzzles? How are sociologists addressing the challenges presented by the social settings in which *we* live? The rest of this book focuses on answering these questions. In the remainder of this chapter, we outline what you can expect to learn from this book.

It would be wrong to think that tens of thousands of sociologists around the world focus on just a few research issues. Sociology today is a heterogeneous enterprise enlivened by hundreds of theoretical debates. Some focus on small issues pertaining to certain fields and geographical areas. Others focus on large issues that characterize the entire historical era for all humanity.

Perhaps the greatest sociological puzzles of today concern the causes and consequences of the **Postindustrial Revolution** and globalization. The Postindustrial Revolution refers to the shift from manufacturing to service industries that result from technological development—in other words, the shift from employment in factories to employment in offices—and the consequences of that shift for most human activities. The Postindustrial Revolution has changed what and how we study, the way we work and form families, and many other aspects of society. For example, as a result of the Postindustrial Revolution, the system of higher education has expanded enormously, non-manual occupations outnumber manual occupations, and a large and growing number of women participate in higher education and the paid labour force.

The **Postindustrial Revolution** refers to the technology-driven shift from manufacturing to service industries and the consequences of that shift for virtually all human activities

Globalization refers to the process of formerly separate economies, states, and cultures becoming interconnected and people becoming more aware of their increasing interdependence. Rapidly growing international trade, travel, and communication have greatly reduced the isolation and independence of most countries and people. Many new institutions connecting corporations, companies, cultures, and individuals have contributed to globalization. Consequently, we now depend more than ever on people in other countries for products, services, ideas, and even a sense of identity.

Globalization is the process by which formerly separate economies, states, and cultures become tied together and people become increasingly aware of their growing interdependence.

Sociologists agree that globalization and postindustrialism promise many exciting opportunities to enhance the quality of life and increase human freedom. However, they also see many social-structural barriers to the realization of that promise. We can summarize both the promise and the barriers by drawing a compass—a sociological compass (see Figure 1.7). Each axis of the compass contrasts a promise with the barriers to its realization. The vertical axis contrasts the promise of equality of opportunity with the barrier of inequality of opportunity. The horizontal axis contrasts the promise of individual freedom with the barrier of constraint on that freedom. Let us consider these axes in detail, because much of our discussion in the following chapters turns on them.

Equality versus Inequality of Opportunity

Optimists believe that postindustrialism will lead to more people finding creative, interesting, challenging, and rewarding work. In addition, they believe the postindustrial era will create more "equality of opportunity," or more opportunities for *everyone* to get an education, influence government policy, and find good jobs.

You will find evidence to support these claims in this book. For example, we show that the average standard of living and the number of good jobs have increased in the postindustrial era. Women have made rapid strides in the economy, the education system, and other institutions. Postindustrial societies like Canada are characterized by a decline in discrimination against members of minority groups, while democracy has spread throughout the world. People living in desperate poverty form a declining percentage of the world's population.

Yet, as you read this book, it will also become clear that there is a dark side to all of these seemingly happy stories. For example, the number of routine jobs with low pay and few benefits is growing faster than the number of creative, high-paying jobs. Men still have many more good job opportunities than women do. Racism and discrimination are still common and, by many accounts, have recently been on the upswing. Our health-care system is in

FIGURE 1.7
A Sociological Compass

crisis just as our rapidly aging population is most in need. Many new democracies are only superficially democratic, and many long-established democracies have become less democratic over the past decade or two. Citizens of Canada and other postindustrial countries are becoming more cynical about the ability of political systems to respond to their needs, and many are looking for different forms of political expression. The absolute number of individuals who are living in desperate poverty around the world continues to grow, as does the gap between rich and poor. Some people believe the world's most serious problems are due to globalization, and they participate in organizations and movements—some of them violent—designed to oppose it. In short, although equality of opportunity is an appealing ideal, it is unclear whether a globalized, postindustrial society will help us attain it.

Freedom versus Constraint

Growing freedom is also evident—but within limits. Historically, most people maintained their religious, ethnic, racial, and sexual identities for a lifetime, even if they were not particularly happy with them. A central theme of this book is that many people are now freer to construct their identities and form social relationships in ways that suit them. In other words, you can often *choose* who you want to be, with whom you want to associate, and how and when you want to associate with them.

The postindustrial and global era allows people to break free from traditional constraints by encouraging the growth of global communication, international migration, sexual diversity, a range of family forms, and ethnically and racially diverse cities. For instance, in the past, families usually consisted of a father working in the paid labour force and a mother keeping house and raising children without pay. People often remained in marriages even if they were unhappy. Today, people are freer to end unhappy marriages and create different family structures that meet their individual needs.

Again, however, it is important to consider the downside of postindustrialism and globalization. In much of this book, we explore how individuals experience increased freedom only within certain limits, and how social diversity is restricted by a strong push toward conformity in some aspects of life. For example, although we can choose from a far wider variety of consumer products than ever before, consumerism itself seems increasingly compulsory even though it often threatens the natural environment. Similarly, some new technologies, such as surveillance cameras, restrict our behaviour and cause us to act in more conformist ways. Large, impersonal bureaucracies and standardized products and services dehumanize both staff and customers. Huge media conglomerates, most of them American-owned, are focused primarily on profit, while their tastes control most of our cultural consumption and may even threaten the survival of distinctive national cultures. Powerful groups are trying to support the traditional nuclear family even though it does not suit some people. As these examples show, the push to uniformity counters the trend toward growing social diversity. Postindustrialism and globalization may make us freer in some ways, but they also place new constraints on us.

Why Sociology?

Our overview of themes in *Sociology: Compass for a New Social World* drives home a point made by Anthony Giddens, renowned British sociologist and adviser to former British prime minister Tony Blair. According to Giddens, we live in an era "suspended between extraordinary opportunity . . . and global catastrophe" (Giddens, 1990: 166). The quality of our everyday lives continues to be profoundly affected by a whole range of environmental issues; profound inequalities in the wealth of nations and of classes; religious, racial, and ethnic violence; and unsolved problems in the relations between women and men.

One possible response to these complex issues is despair and apathy. But that is not a response that humans have often favoured. If it were our nature to give up hope, we would still be sitting around half-naked in the mud outside a cave. People are more inclined to look

for ways of improving their lives, and this period of human history is full of opportunities to do so. We have, for example, advanced to the point where, for the first time, we have the means to feed and educate everyone in the world. Similarly, it now seems possible to erode some of the inequalities that have always been with us and have always been the major source of human conflict.

Careers in Sociology

Sociology is more than just an intellectual exercise. It also provides useful advice on how to achieve the goals of equality and freedom. It offers practical, everyday uses in the realms of teaching and public policy, the creation of laws and regulations by organizations and governments. That is because sociologists are trained not just to see what is but also to see what is possible.

Students often ask: "Can I get a good job with a sociology degree?" "Exactly what kind of work could I do with a major in sociology?" "Aren't all the good jobs these days in technical areas and the natural sciences?" To answer these questions, consider the following.

A sociology BA improves one's understanding of the diverse social conditions affecting men and women, people with different sexual orientations, and people from different countries, regions, classes, races, and ethnic groups. Therefore, people with a BA in sociology tend to be attracted to jobs requiring good "people skills" and jobs involved with managing and promoting social change (see Table 1.2).

Often, people with a BA in sociology go on to graduate school and obtain professional degrees in related fields, including law, urban planning, industrial relations, social work, and public policy. You will therefore find many people with bachelor's degrees in sociology

TABLE 1.2

Jobs Most Commonly Held by Canadians with a BA in Sociology

Source: Adapted with permission from *Opportunities in Sociology*, pamphlet published by the Canadian Sociological Association and Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia, 2014.

Government

Affirmative action work
Community affairs
Development aide
Foreign service work
Human rights officer
Information officer
Legislative assistant
Personnel coordinator
Policy research
Urban/regional planner

Teaching/Education

Admissions counsellor
Alumni relations
Continuing studies
Postsecondary recruitment
Public health educator
Records and registration
School counselling
Student development
Teacher

Social Research

Census officer/analyst
Consumer researcher
Data analyst
Demographer
Market researcher
Social research specialist
Survey researcher
Systems analyst

Business

Actuary
Administrative assistant
Advertising officer
Computer analyst
Consumer relations
Data entry manager
Human resources specialist
Insurance agent
Journalist
Labour relations officer
Market analyst
Merchandiser/purchaser
Personnel officer
Production manager
Project manager
Public relations officer
Publishing officer
Quality control manager
Real estate agent
Sales manager
Sales representative
Technical writing

Community Affairs

Addictions counselling
Adoption counselling
Caseworker
Child development
Community organizer
Environmental organizer
Family planning
Fundraising
Gerontologist
Group home programmer
Health outreach work
Homeless/housing worker
Hospital administration
Housing coordinator
Marriage/family counselling
Occupational/career counsellor
Public health worker
Rehabilitation work
Residential planning
Social assistance advocate
Welfare counselling
Youth outreach

working as lawyers, urban planners, city managers, statisticians, and health-care and education administrators.

Many people with a graduate degree in sociology teach and conduct research in colleges and universities, with research being a more important component of the job in larger and more prestigious institutions. However, many sociologists do not teach. Instead, they conduct research and give policy advice in a wide range of settings outside the system of higher education. For example, in many federal government agencies, sociologists are employed as researchers and policy consultants. Sociologists also conduct research and policy analysis in trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and professional and public interest associations. In the private sector, you can find sociologists practising their craft in firms specializing in public opinion polling, management consulting, market research, standardized testing, and evaluation research, which assesses the impact of particular policies and programs.

One way of seeing the benefits of a sociological education is to compile a list of some of the famous practical idealists who studied sociology in university. That list includes several former heads of state, among them Fernando Cardoso, president of Brazil; the late Tomas Masaryk, president of Czechoslovakia; Edward Seaga, prime minister of Jamaica; and Ronald Reagan, US president. The former first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, has a sociology degree. Before she lived in the White House, she worked as commissioner of planning and development at Chicago City Hall and as the founding executive director of a program that prepares youth for public service. As first lady, she continued shaping public policy regarding nutrition and childhood obesity. Lorna Marsden, a former vice-president of the Liberal Party of Canada and former president and vice-chancellor of York University in Toronto, is a sociologist, as is York's current president and vice-chancellor, Rhonda Lenton. Anthony Giddens, former director of the London School of Economics, earned a graduate degree in sociology. So did the heads of two of Canada's leading public opinion firms: Martin Goldfarb, a principal of Goldfarb Intelligence Marketing and president of The Goldfarb Corporation, and Michael Adams, president of Environics. Alex Himelfarb, former clerk of the Privy Council (Canada's highest-ranking civil servant), holds a sociology PhD, too, as did the late Daniel Hill, the first full-time director of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and former Ontario ombudsman. All these people enjoyed careers that nicely answer the question "What can you do with a sociology degree?" You can change the world.

In sum, although sociology does not offer easy solutions to the question of how the goal of improving society may be accomplished, it does provide a useful way of understanding our current predicament and seeing possible ways of dealing with it, of leading us a little farther away from the mud outside the cave. You sampled sociology's ability to tie personal troubles to social-structural issues when we discussed suicide and reviewed *Joker*. You reviewed the major theoretical perspectives that enable sociologists to connect the personal with the social-structural. When we outlined the half-fulfilled promises of postindustrialism and globalization, you saw sociology's ability to provide an understanding of where we are and where we can go.

We frankly admit that the questions we raise in this book are tough to answer. Sharp controversy surrounds them all. However, we are sure that if you try to grapple with them, you will enhance your understanding of your society's, and your own, possibilities. In brief, sociology can help you figure out where you fit into society and how you can make society fit you.

Time for Review

- What are some of the greatest social tensions in our time?
- These tensions have emerged in a particular social context. What are the chief features of that context?

Summary

1. **What is sociology?**
   Sociology is the systematic study of human behaviour in social context. The sociological perspective analyzes the connection between personal troubles and social structures.

2. **Where are the social relations that surround you, permeate you, and influence your behaviour?**
   Social relations exist in micro (small-scale, face-to-face), macro (large-scale, more impersonal), and global (very large scale, cross-cultural, and cross-country) social structures. Insofar as these social structures open up some opportunities and close off others, they influence human behaviour.

3. **How does sociological research seek to test ideas using scientific methods and thereby improve people's lives?**
   Sociological research begins with values—ideas about what is good and bad, right and wrong. Values often motivate sociologists to define which problems are worth studying and to make initial assumptions about how to explain sociological phenomena. These explanations are theories—tentative explanations of some aspect of social life. Theories state how and why specific facts are connected. Research is the process of systematically observing social reality to test the validity of a theory. Sociological theories may be modified and even rejected through research. Thus, sociological research uses scientific methods to evaluate ideas but the desire to improve people's lives often motivates the research.

4. **What are the main theoretical traditions in sociology?**
   Sociology has four major theoretical traditions. Functionalism analyzes how social order is supported by macrostructures. The conflict approach analyzes how social inequality is maintained and challenged in macro and global structures. Symbolic interactionism analyzes how meaning is created when people communicate in microlevel settings. Feminist theories focus on the social sources of patriarchy in both macrolevel and microlevel settings.

5. **How did sociology emerge out of the Scientific Revolution, the Democratic Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution?**
   The Scientific Revolution encouraged the view that sound conclusions about the workings of society must be based on evidence, not just on speculation. The Democratic Revolution suggested that people are responsible for organizing society and that human intervention can therefore solve social problems. The Industrial Revolution created a host of new and serious social problems that attracted the attention of many social thinkers.

6. **What are the main challenges facing society today?**
   The Postindustrial Revolution is the technology-driven shift from manufacturing to service industries. Globalization is the process by which formerly separate economies, states, and cultures become tied together and people become increasingly aware of their growing interdependence. The causes and consequences of postindustrialism and globalization form the great sociological puzzles of our time. The tensions between equality and inequality of opportunity, and between freedom and constraint, are among the chief interests of sociologists today.

Note

1. Sociologists also distinguish *mesostructures*, which are social relations that link microstructures and macrostructures. See Chapter 6, Networks, Groups, Bureaucracies, and Societies.

2 How Sociologists Do Research

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Identify common mistakes in unscientific thinking.
- Explain how viewpoint affects understanding.
- List the major steps in qualitative and quantitative research.
- Outline the ethical norms guiding sociological research.
- Contrast the experimental and survey methods used by quantitative researchers with the participant observation and interviewing methods used by qualitative researchers.
- Examine how digital technologies can be used to learn about social life.

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Science and Experience

OTTFFSSENT

"Okay, Mr. Smarty Pants, see if you can figure this one out." That's how Robert Brym's 11-year-old daughter, Talia, greeted him one day when she came home from school. "I wrote some letters of the alphabet on this sheet of paper. They form a pattern. Take a look at the letters and tell me the pattern."

Robert took the sheet of paper from Talia and smiled confidently. "Like most North Americans, I'd had a lot of experience with this sort of puzzle," says Robert. "For example, most IQ and SAT tests ask you to find patterns in sequences of letters, and you learn certain ways of solving these problems. One of the most common methods is to see if the 'distance' between adjoining letters stays the same or varies predictably. For example, in the sequence ADGJ, there are two missing letters between each adjoining pair. Insert the missing letters and you get the first ten letters of the alphabet: A(BC)D(EF)G(HI)J.

"This time, however, I was stumped. On the sheet of paper, Talia had written the letters OTTFFSSENT. I tried to use the distance method to solve the problem. Nothing worked. After ten minutes of head-scratching, I gave up."

"The answer's easy," Talia said, clearly pleased at her father's failure. "Spell out the numbers 1 to 10. The first letter of each word—one, two, three, and so on—spells OTTFFSSENT. Looks like you're not as smart as you thought. See ya." And with that she bounced off to her room.

"Later that day, it dawned on me that Talia had taught me more than just a puzzle. She had shown me that experience sometimes prevents people from seeing things. My experience with solving letter puzzles by using certain set methods kept me from solving the unusual problem of OTTFFSSENT."

Said differently, reality (in this case, a pattern of letters) is not just a thing "out there" that we can learn to perceive "objectively." As social scientists have appreciated for more than a century, *experience* helps determine how we perceive reality, including what patterns we see and whether we can see patterns at all (Hughes, 1967: 16).

Concrete experience is obtained by seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, and hearing.

Abstract experience is the imaginary world of the mind.

Concepts are abstract terms used to organize concrete experience.

Propositions are ideas that result from finding the relationship between concepts.

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Experience helps determine how we see "reality." 3-D illustration of M. C. Escher's "Relativity"

Levels of Experience

To understand what experience is, it is useful to distinguish concrete from abstract levels of experience. Each level has unique characteristics. You obtain **concrete experience** by seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, and hearing. However, the concrete level of experience is meaningless by itself. If life were experienced exclusively at the concrete level, it would be full of sensations but devoid of meaning.

The abstract level of experience saves you from a state of confusion. **Abstract experience** occurs in your mind. It resides in the world of imagination. It allows you to find meaning in the letters printed on this page. The abstract level is composed of **concepts**. Concepts are abstract terms for organizing sensory experience. They are what enables you to buy a coffee at Tim Hortons with a Bank of Canada $5 bill but not with Canadian Tire money.

Your mind is full of concepts that enable you to organize and give meaning to your concrete experience. Your mind also relates concepts to one another and, in doing so, forms **propositions**. Propositions are abstract statements that express the relationship between two or more concepts.

Social issues such as poverty, deviance, and educational attainment (and all the others that fill this textbook) are often on people's minds, as is evident by browsing through newspapers or blogs. People use concepts to characterize these issues and express propositions about how concepts are related. In the marketplace of ideas, propositions about almost any topic span the whole range of possibilities. Sociologists add their voices to the chorus.

Ideas about social life are like all propositions: they reside in the abstract world of people's minds. The distinguishing feature of *sociological* ideas is that sociologists connect their abstract concepts and propositions to systematically collected evidence. This chapter introduces common methodological procedures used by sociological practitioners to formulate propositions that are sustained by evidence. We begin our review by contrasting scientific and unscientific thinking.

Scientific versus Unscientific Thinking

WAYS OF KNOWING ABOUT THE WORLD

In science, seeing is believing. But in everyday life, believing is seeing. In other words, in everyday life our **biases** easily influence our observations. This circumstance often leads us to draw incorrect conclusions about what we see. In contrast, scientists, including sociologists, develop ways of collecting, observing, and thinking about evidence that minimize their chance of drawing biased conclusions. Ask yourself: On what basis do you decide statements are true? To make these decisions, humans rely on three basic ways of knowing (Babbie et al., 2021):

Bias is the systematic tendency to reach a certain type of conclusion or judgment.

1. *Casual observation* is ordinary human inquiry performed during our day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, we are usually pretty careless observers, and our memories of events are rarely as accurate as we think they are. Criminologists have long known how profound the impact of inaccurate observations can be, eyewitness testimony having led to numerous wrongful convictions (Public Prosecution Service of Canada, 2018). This does not mean that casual observations are never useful. Sociologists might casually notice something that leads them to investigate it systematically.
2. Relying on *tradition* is a second basic way of knowing. Although plenty of traditional knowledge is valid (sugar will rot your teeth), some is not (masturbation will not blind you). Science is required to separate valid from invalid knowledge. For example, it is customary for parents to inspect their child's Halloween haul for fear of razor blades and needles buried in apples or candy; your grandparents probably did so for your parents just as your parents did for you. We just assume it's a necessary precaution against homicidal strangers since that's the way it has been done for a long time. However, sociologist Joel Best's review of over 60 years of crime data shows that cases of deliberate tampering are extraordinarily rare, with not a single case of injury going back as far as 1958 (Best, 2019). When harmful incidents did occur, Best found that they always turned out to be accidents, often due to hoaxes gone wrong.
3. Finally, we know things by relying on *authority*. We often think something is true because we read it in an authoritative source or hear it from an expert. However, authorities can be wrong. Scientists question authority to arrive at more valid knowledge. In recent years, celebrities have come to be considered experts on a broad array of topics despite lack of any formal training in them. Yes, we're talking to you, Gwyneth Paltrow. The actor's lifestyle/wellness brand Goop is valued at over

FamVeld/Shutterstock

No, your neighbour did not put razor blades in your Halloween treats.

Doro Guzenda/Shutterstock

Would you give your colon a "coffee cleanse" if a celebrity told you that it was good for you?

$250 million, based on convincing mainly white affluent women to cleanse their colons with the US$135 "Implant-o-Rama" coffee enema, among other things (Canadian Press, 2018). According to Timothy Caulfield, who holds a Canada Research Chair in Health and Law Policy at the University of Alberta, it's part of a $5 billion celebrity-driven detox/cleansing industry premised on absolutely no scientific evidence. Not only do our bodies not need detoxifying (a healthy diet, exercise, and our kidneys will take care of all that), procedures like colon cleanses pose health risks, including nausea, vomiting, and infection (Caulfield, 2015). Detox claims are an example of **pseudoscience** in that they sound authoritative but don't have systematic evidence to back them up. A hallmark of pseudoscience is resistance to anyone who challenges the claims, even in the face of disconfirming evidence. Real science subjects itself to scrutiny and is willing to be proven wrong.

Pseudoscience involves claims and beliefs that sound scientific but do not meet the standards of the scientific method.

Why do we continue to fall for celebrity-endorsed detox products? On a cultural level, celebrity testimonials are highly seductive compared with the relatively unglamorous and more complex realm of scientific journal articles. Scientific illiteracy is widespread, and we are inundated with alternative-medicine websites and talk show hosts featuring celebrity endorsements uncritically (Caulfield, 2017; Gunter, 2019; Kennedy and Hefferon, 2019). On an individual level, our tendency to think unscientifically persists partly because in our daily lives we're casual observers who don't necessarily think critically about what we see and hear. All these issues can lead to common errors in inquiry that scientists aim to avoid. Let's look at a few of them.

COMMON ERRORS IN INQUIRY

Overgeneralization error occurs when we focus on exceptions and treat them as the rule. For instance, if you know a few people who started off living in poverty, worked hard, and became rich, you may think any person living in poverty can become rich by working hard enough. You may not know about the more numerous people living in poverty who work hard and remain poor or about the rich people who never worked hard.

George Pimentel/WireImage/Getty Images

Former *Hockey Night in Canada* *Coach's Corner* cohost Don Cherry

Selective observation occurs when we unconsciously ignore evidence that challenges our firmly held beliefs and pay attention to (i.e., selectively observe) evidence that confirms them. When former *Coach's Corner* cohost Don Cherry singled out "you people" (implying immigrants) for not wearing poppies on Remembrance Day, his methodological flaw was that he did not systematically compare immigrants and non-immigrants. Ironically, this procedure is also known as "cherry picking" data. We know that the number of poppies distributed by the Royal Canadian Legion dropped by three million between 2015 and 2019 (Gurney, 2019). But we have no idea why the number fell or which categories of the population are responsible for it because nobody has conducted scientific research on the subject. Regardless of where you stand on the controversy over Cherry's firing from Sportsnet, remember that whenever you make generalizations about any category of people, it is always useful to ask yourself whether systematically collected evidence exists to support your generalization.

Illogical reasoning is yet another source of error. "The Toronto Raptors won 60 percent of their basketball games over the last three months but 70 percent of the games they played on Saturdays. *Because it happened so often before*, I bet they'll win next Saturday." In everyday life, we may expect the recurrence of events without reasonable cause, ignoring the fact that rare sequences of events sometimes occur just by chance. Chance coincidences can also convince people that a supernatural or mystical force is at work as they try to find patterns in their experience and assign meaning to them.

BOX 2.1 Sociology and the Media

THE HOLLYWOOD MEDIUM

Psychics claim to be able to predict the future. Mediums like Tyler Henry, the star of *Hollywood Medium* on E! Television Network, claim they can communicate with the dead. Many practitioners claim they can do both, and about 4 in 10 North Americans believe them (Bibby et al., 2019; Gecewicz/Pew Research, 2018). Plenty of people doubt such claims. Nonetheless, over the past 15 years, the psychic/medium industry has grown by more than 50 percent, with annual revenue of over $2 billion in the United States alone (IBISWorld, 2018). By examining the claims of psychics and mediums, we can illustrate some of the differences between scientific and unscientific thinking.

Psychics and mediums have been around for centuries. What is new is their ability to capitalize on digital technology. One strategy they use is "hot reading," which involves doing online research about clients before meeting them. A mention of a client's name in a grandparent's online obituary, an Instagram post about a client's travels, a Twitter comment about a client's excitement at scoring tickets to a big concert—all such information is fodder for the meeting.

Kathy Hutchins/Shutterstock

E! Television Network's *Hollywood Medium* star Tyler Henry claims to connect celebrities with their deceased loved ones.

Another option is "cold reading," in which the medium does not know anything about the client beforehand but makes probabilistic guesses. The magician's art of misdirection is crucial here, in that incorrect guesses are quickly dismissed as the medium moves on to other topics. Anyone can do cold reading with practice. Here are some tried and true tips (Hyman, 1977):

Focus on common objects (jewellery, photos, toys) or experiences (difficulty breathing, dying suddenly, no time to say goodbye) that can apply to almost anyone but are made to feel personal. Expand them as needed, and watch your subject for clues.

Ask lots of questions. This is known as shotgunning. It's better than making specific statements for which you might be wrong and helps you fish for information.

Tell clients what they want to hear. Comfort them. For instance, make sure to say that their loved one is happy, at peace, and watching over them.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Tyler Henry has posted several of his readings on YouTube, mostly of celebrities like Lizzo and the Kardashians. View one. What cold reading techniques did he use? What hot reading techniques might he have also used?
2. A friend insists that a medium he saw is the real deal. He says, "How could they have known that?" What would you say to him?

WHAT'S THE HARM?

Why does it matter if a woman wants to put Gwyneth Paltrow's healing crystals in her vagina thinking that it will help her sex life, or if a bereaved couple is comforted by the belief that their dead toddler has spoken to them through Tyler Henry (see Box 2.1)? If it makes people feel better, what's the harm?

The greatest harm is that the consequences of unscientific thinking can be deadly. For instance, in recent years, several Canadian children died from infections after parents denied them conventional medical care, opting instead for the cabbage leaves, cayenne pepper, and dandelion tea promoted on alternative medicine websites (Grant and Anderson, 2017).

In February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an "infodemic." Social media were spreading misinformation about the origin, prevention, and treatment of COVID-19. Among the treatments being touted were bleach, garlic soup, silver, and cow urine, as well as cocaine and nutritional supplements (Caulfield, 2020; Mosleh, 2020). In response, the WHO assembled an army of fact checkers and myth busters to work with social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok to have misinformation removed as quickly as possible. One study found that 82 percent of the 50 most influential COVID-19 retweeters (and 62 percent of the top 1000 retweeters) were not in fact real people. They were bot accounts created to spread COVID-19 misinformation, often with an anti-vaccination agenda (Young, 2020).

Perhaps the most notorious social media takedown was the documentary *Plandemic*, which focused on a former scientist's claim that COVID-19 emerged from a laboratory and that its deliberate spread was due to a conspiracy among pharmaceutical companies and the US government to develop a profit-making vaccine for every person in the world. Among her debunked claims: masks should be avoided because they can activate the virus (Landsverk and Woodward, 2020). The video was removed by mainstream sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Vimeo shortly after its initial appearance in early May 2020. However, it went viral through uploads to alternative platforms, racking up millions of views.

Pseudoscience and conspiracy theories prey on human tendencies toward selective observation and illogical reasoning. They threaten public health by confusing people about who to trust for information, generating panic, and hindering effective response by public health agencies (Ali and Kurasawa, 2020; Zaracostas, 2020). But evidence of their popularity abounds. Even in the United Kingdom, with the highest death toll in Europe by May 2020, University of Oxford researchers found that one in five people thought that COVID-19 was, to some degree, a hoax (Freeman et al., 2020).

Some commentators draw a parallel between COVID-19 and climate change, arguing that pandemic denialism foreshadows things to come. Fully 97 percent of climate scientists agree that the human production of greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide and methane) is heating up the atmosphere and melting polar ice; causing more intense storms, flooding, forest fires, and drought; extinguishing thousands of animal species; and threatening to kill millions of people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Yet some people—around 30 percent of Canadians and 40 percent of Americans—insist that the climate crisis is exaggerated and/or not caused by humans (Cook et al., 2016; Nassar and Kelly, 2018). Their skepticism is reinforced by the words and actions of industries, politicians, and governments that are especially dependent on the production of fossil fuels, the main source of greenhouse gas emissions.

But if science requires critical thinking, does that mean that there is little tolerance or room for values and beliefs associated with things that cannot be empirically tested, such as the existence of God? Endorsing science does not require rejecting religion. Religion is based on faith rather than systematically collected and observable evidence, and it offers a type of knowledge that is different from the knowledge that scientists produce (see Chapter 15, Religion). Science requires enduring curiosity, ongoing skepticism, and persistent demand for reliable evidence. Good social scientists do their best to keep open minds and an open hearts and, in seeking to establish valid generalizations, remain willing to have their theories and evidence challenged.

Time for Review

- How does the abstract level of experience differ from the concrete level?
- A child asks her mother, "Why do I have to go to bed so early?" Her mother responds, "Because I said so!" In what sense is the mother's response unscientific?
- Literally, the term *research* means "look again." What thinking errors are most closely associated with someone uninterested in research?

Research Preliminaries

Research Approaches

REALITY CONSTRUCTION AND CONFIRMATION

Imaginary, abstract experience differs from concrete, empirical experience. Everyone uses some method for linking these two kinds of experience. The resulting connections determine a person's understanding of what is real.

Through the process of linking abstract understanding to concrete sensations, we construct social realities. For example, the singer/actor Ariana Grande believes ghosts are real. She reports that when in a cemetery with some friends, there was a "sick, overwhelming feeling of negativity over the whole car and we smelled sulfur, which is the sign of a demon" (Radar Staff, 2014). Grande is not alone among celebrities in believing ghosts are real. Sharing this belief are Conan O'Brien, Demi Lovato, Kate Hudson, Kesha, Matthew McConaughey, Miley Cyrus, Nicolas Cage, Paz de la Huerta, Susan Boyle, and Taylor Momsen. Each of them acquired this understanding by matching the concept of "ghost" with some experience. Do you think ghosts are real? If so, you probably went through a similar reality-construction process.

One goal of scientific research is to produce *objective* results. It is worth clarifying what objectivity means, since the concept is subject to confusing stereotypes. Objectivity is not the result of researchers suspending their values, freeing themselves of bias, and producing uncontaminated statements about reality. Scientists are not special types of humans. Just like everyone else, scientists have values and biases. Their ideas and observations, like everyone's, are necessarily subjective. The impressive record of science is not based on its practitioners enjoying an unusual gift for being dispassionate. Science gets its power from its methods, from its procedures, and from how it goes about generating results.

In this context, when scientists speak of **objectivity**, they mean "inter-subjective reliability." All initial observations in science are subjective, since they are generated by real people who cannot escape themselves or society. Objectivity emerges as independent researchers who are examining the same object produce consistent (that is, reliable) observations. More independent observations and more consistency yield stronger evidence of objectivity. Producing objective findings is difficult and demanding work that results from using the scientific method, not from the special character of scientists.

Objectivity is assessed by the degree of consistency between the observations of independent observers.

INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

A useful way to classify viewpoints relies on the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders." You will appreciate this difference if you have ever navigated a maze. A maze is a walking puzzle containing many paths. Some lead to dead ends, and one leads to the exit. When you enter a maze, the goal is to find the route that leads to the exit.

You traverse the maze as an insider. Like all viewpoints, that of the insider has both limitations and benefits. In this case, one limitation is the sense of confusion and frustration that occurs because the tall sides of every path restrict your vision. At every turn, your view and understanding are restricted by what surrounds you. At the same time, however, you have an intimate appreciation of the surrounding details.

Owners of mazes often provide help for people in the maze. Help typically comes from either a map or a sentinel who stands on a platform overseeing the maze's operation. Both the map and the sentinel provide an outsider's view, which is helpful because it provides a bird's-eye perspective. Not overwhelmed by the extensive details of an insider's perspective, the outsider enjoys a view of the forest rather than the trees.

The maze is analogous to social life. People find themselves in groups and organizations of all sorts. As members of these communities, people are bound to have detailed experiences and insights. This knowledge constitutes an insider's appreciation of how the community operates. For example, Indigenous peoples have a rich and detailed appreciation of reservation life that urban dwellers lack. The inner workings of Hells Angels are well understood by full-patch members but are foreign to outsiders. Many of the people in your class, perhaps including you, are new to Canada. What do you think it would be like for an immigrant who grew up in a warm climate to arrive in Toronto, Edmonton, or Winnipeg in the middle of winter? When lacking the insider's experience, navigating the maze can be exciting but also bewildering and isolating. The same holds true for all manner of ethnic, racial, gender, subcultural, and class communities (Kulik et al., 2012; Horton, 2013). In sociological terms, an insider's position and unique experience provide intimate sensitivities and understandings that are inaccessible to outsiders.

Outsiders offer a different perspective. It may be that only members of particular communities are able to understand certain features of those communities. However, insiders' perspectives restrict them from understanding what non-members can see. For example, individuals visiting Canada for the first time can offer insights about our country that are not obvious to us. RCMP task force members see things about the Hells Angels organization that its members don't appreciate. You have a different awareness of your partner's virtues and vices than your partner does (and vice versa). We conclude that our social position shapes our perspective and what we know. No person or group has a monopoly on knowledge.

POSITIVIST AND INTERPRETIVE TRADITIONS

Positivists assume that social realities are objective and are best studied through quantitative research methods.

The positivist tradition in sociology began with one of the originators of the discipline, Auguste Comte. His goal, like the goal of **positivists** who continue in this tradition, was to model sociology after the natural sciences.

Positivists assume that social realities exist independent of observers and are "out there" waiting to be discovered. In this tradition, social realities are objective, in the sense that they are the same for you and me. From the positivist viewpoint, the task of sociological methods is to develop tools to observe and measure objective social reality in a *quantitative* manner, which often entails using surveys and statistics. Positivists believe that continuing sociological research will result in the steady accumulation of reliable, valid knowledge of the social world that, in turn, can be used to guide constructive social change.

Interpretivists assume that social realities are subjectively constructed and are best studied through qualitative research methods.

Sociologists working in the interpretive tradition are skeptical of the positivists' worldview. **Interpretivists** emphasize the importance of subjectivity and insiders' understanding. The interpretive tradition does not believe in a universal, independent social reality. Its practitioners believe that all understanding is contingent and meaningfully constructed based on historical, cultural, and social experience. Interpretivists emphasize that the key drivers of human conduct (meanings and motives) cannot be observed directly. Therefore, they reason, trying to apply the methods of the physical sciences to social realities will create, at best, trivial results. The interpretivist tradition favours using *qualitative* methods to gain insight into how differing definitions of reality shape social outcomes. This methodology usually entails systematically observing social settings and describing observations using words, not numbers.

The sociological theories introduced in Chapter 1 are organized in the positivist and interpretive traditions. Functionalists, such as Durkheim, are generally guided by the positivist tradition. They argue that social systems have objective structural characteristics that can be understood through quantitative research and that these structural characteristics are external to, and affect, individuals. By contrast, symbolic interactionists argue that understanding individuals' unique definitions of experience provide key insights into their conduct and that such understanding must be obtained through research methods tailored for this purpose. Conflict and feminist theorists draw on both traditions.

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TRADITIONS

Sociology's theoretical traditions give different emphases to insider and outsider perspectives. These differences have consequences for how researchers gather evidence to test their ideas. Researchers employing a positivist approach emphasize *deductive* reasoning and quantitative methods. Researchers working in the interpretive tradition use *inductive* reasoning and qualitative methods. Appreciating these differences can assist in understanding the strengths of the evidence provided in support of the ideas proposed.

Deductive reasoning begins with general ideas and proceeds to test their validity on specific cases.

The deductive approach is a "top-down" process. It begins with the general case and moves to specific instances. **Deductive reasoning** begins with some general idea and then tests whether the idea is credible. The original propositions used in deduction come from theoretical reasoning that occurs at the abstract level. For example, before making any empirical observations, there may be theoretical reasons for thinking that today's students are less empathetic than those of previous generations, or that the European Union will collapse by 2025. By themselves, these abstract assertions are speculations—but they are also

propositions that can be tested empirically. If empirical tests confirm these abstract propositions, then the result is new knowledge. In this way, deduction moves from the abstract to the concrete levels of experience.

Inductive reasoning is the process of going from the specific case to the general one. It is "bottom-up" in its approach. Inductive reasoning begins when observations are made of specific empirical instances. If you go on a blind date and enjoy the company of your brown-eyed partner, you have made one observation. If your next 50 blind dates all reveal that brown-eyed people are more fun than others, a pattern emerges. From your experiences, you might generalize about the connection between eye colour and fun: brown-eyed dates are more fun. Such knowledge might become your rule for understanding the reality of the dating world. You may generalize that it is prudent to pass over the green-eyed and the blue-eyed if you want to have fun. The goal here is not quantitative measurement but interpretive understanding. By concentrating on fewer cases in a more intensive manner, qualitative researchers using inductive methods seek to understand the richness of reality as experienced by participants in social life.

Inductive reasoning begins with concrete cases and proceeds to identify general patterns and themes.

The Research Act: Connecting Ideas to Evidence

Whether quantitative or qualitative techniques are employed, the goal of research is to connect ideas to observable evidence. Because quantitative and qualitative researchers begin their search in different places, they follow different steps in making the connection.

Qualitative research takes the following steps:

1. Identify a research interest based on concrete experience.
2. Collect evidence from one or more cases of the same type.
3. Analyze the evidence to identify common patterns and themes.
4. Use sociological concepts and principles to provide an interpretation of the patterns and themes, stressing the context in which the experience took place.

This process represents an inductive approach. You begin with a concrete experience that sparks an interest. From there, the steps lead you to a progressively deeper understanding, first by examining additional cases of the same type, and then coming to a generalized interpretation. The qualitative model assumes contextualized understanding is critical, so immersion in well-chosen cases is central to subjective understanding.

Quantitative research follows a different path, based on deduction. This model includes the following steps:

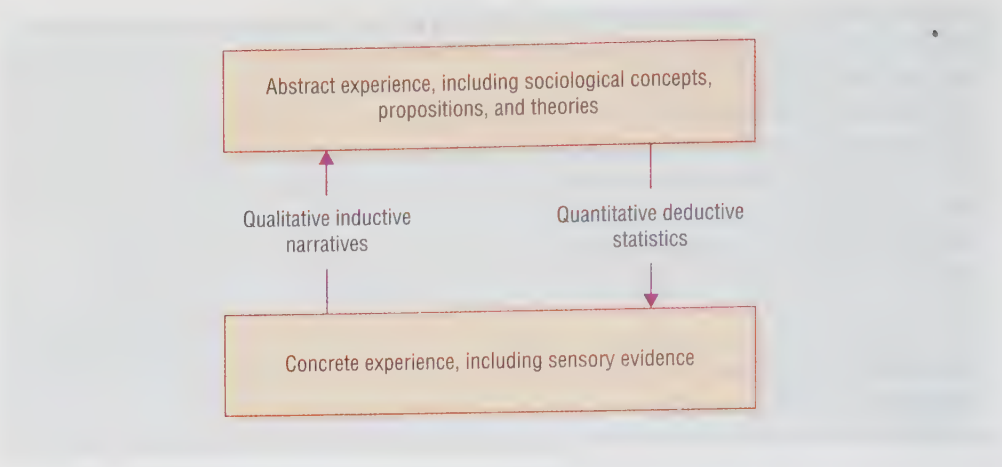
1. Identify a theoretical idea of interest.
2. Translate the abstract idea into a testable hypothesis.
3. Collect and analyze data.
4. Accept or reject the hypothesis based on the data analysis.

This approach is deductive since it begins with a general idea and proceeds to test the idea on specific cases. The approach is quantitative insofar as the hypothesis test is conducted on precisely measured variables.

Quantitative and qualitative research projects are rooted in contrasting viewpoints and result in different sorts of understanding. Quantitative understanding is based on numbers and statistics; qualitative understanding, on narratives. Quantitative studies provide a broad understanding that focuses on a relatively small number of variables; qualitative studies provide a narrower understanding that is rich in detail. One approach is not better than the other. Their appropriateness for solving a particular problem depends on the research goals. Each of these research approaches provides unique, valuable insights that are beyond the reach of the other.

The quantitative and qualitative research traditions provide complementary understandings that can enrich each other. Each generates a specific type of knowledge of social reality by linking ideas and evidence. Taken together, they form a continuous loop that connects abstract ideas to concrete experience, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1
The Research Cycle


Abstract experience, including sociological concepts, propositions, and theories
Qualitative inductive narratives
Quantitative deductive statistics
Concrete experience, including sensory evidence

Ethical Considerations

Collecting evidence from individuals has the potential to disrupt the lives of participants. Imagine how upsetting it might be to ask people about traumatic memories they have long suppressed, or to observe them acting in ways that are shameful, or to uncover biographical information that is at odds with their present identity. No matter how fascinating or important sociologists believe their studies to be, they have no right to proceed in ways that override the rights of others.

To protect the rights of others, sociological research is guided by a code of ethics. Research ethics are principles that determine whether research procedures are admissible or inadmissible. The standards specified by research ethics do not focus on specific acts. Rather, they are norms to which researchers are supposed to aspire. Like most ethical issues, the gap between ethical ideals and their application in real-world circumstances varies. In Canada, the Canadian Sociological Association has codified the relevant professional ethics (www.csa-scs.ca/code-of-ethics). The basic principles include voluntary participation, harm minimization, privacy, and authenticity (Babbie et al., 2021: 62–9). Let us review each of these principles in turn.

The principle of *voluntary participation* requires that subjects participate because they have chosen to do so. Participants should not be forced to participate. In extreme instances, the application of this principle is clear. But, like all ethical issues, ambiguity enters as we move from the extreme. For example, if a professor asks students to participate in a half-hour survey as a component of their course grade, is participation completely voluntary?

A second ethical principle centres on *harm minimization*, sometimes called the right to safety. Even if participants participate voluntarily, they have the right not to be injured. Here, injury is broadly defined to include not just bodily harm but also psychological and social harm. Again, while the application of this principle at the extremes is clear, it becomes problematic in many situations. Given the wide variation in human character traits and temperament, how can a researcher know in advance which data collection techniques will upset which research subjects?

Informed consent is participants' acknowledgment that they are aware of the risks of participation in research and are participating voluntarily.

These first two ethical principles are merged in the concept of **informed consent**. Informed consent requires that voluntary participation be based on a full understanding of the risks of participation (Babbie et al., 2021: 65). For that reason, participants are commonly asked to sign an informed consent form that outlines the attendant risks and acknowledges their voluntary participation.

Anonymity occurs when a researcher cannot identify research subjects based on evidence.

Third, research participants should enjoy the right to *privacy*. In other words, participants' identities must be protected. The right to privacy takes two forms, one stronger than the other. The stronger form guarantees research subjects' anonymity. **Anonymity** requires that both the researcher and the consumers of the research do not know how particular research subjects

answered questions. With anonymity, the evidence is not linked to any information on the identity of the people from whom the evidence was collected. Without any link, privacy is guaranteed. However, in many cases, it is impossible to guarantee anonymity. For example, if research subjects are contacted by telephone, their phone number serves as an identity marker. In these cases, privacy is established through confidentiality. **Confidentiality** occurs when the researcher possesses the link between research subjects and evidence but agrees to destroy or not share this information. Confidentiality represents a weaker form of privacy than anonymity since research subjects must trust the researcher not to disclose their identities.

Confidentiality occurs when a researcher can identify research subjects by examining evidence but agrees not to do so.

The fourth principle of research ethics concerns *authenticity*. Authenticity occurs when appearances match reality. When they are mismatched, deception occurs. Protecting the dignity of research subjects requires that they not be deceived. Deception can take many forms but commonly includes not informing subjects that they are being studied and lying to them about the goals of the study. Deception does occur in some research studies, often because the research could not proceed otherwise. In instances where research subjects are duped, researchers need to be particularly careful. This care typically takes two forms. First, researchers must have a compelling argument stating why the importance of the study's results override authenticity concerns. Second, researchers must debrief subjects. **Debriefing** involves interviewing participants at the close of the investigation to inform them of what actually took place and manage any evident concerns.

Debriefing involves interviewing participants after a study to clarify what occurred and deal with any fallout related to deception.

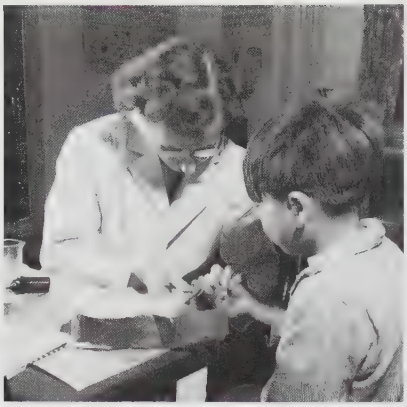
In general, the field of research ethics focuses on the rights of participants. However, ethical principles also extend to consumers of research. On this account, researchers are required to conduct their data analyses honestly and report their findings fully and fairly. Otherwise, those who rely on the research findings will be deceived.

You have probably encountered a meme or social media post that says something like "Please, for the last time, vaccines do NOT cause autism!" Its roots lie in one of the most memorable examples of scientific deception in recent memory. When British physician Andrew Wakefield and colleagues published the results of a study linking measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines to autism in prominent medical journal *The Lancet* in 1998, a media firestorm ensued. Anti-vaccination movements and conspiracy theories about drug companies permeated popular culture. The problem? Wakefield's study was a fraud. After other researchers were unable to reproduce Wakefield's findings (and spent millions of dollars trying), it was discovered that the twelve children in his study were not randomly selected; they had been handpicked. He had also failed to disclose to *The Lancet* editors that his study was partially funded by lawyers for several parents who had sued vaccine manufacturers. Wakefield was investigated and struck from the United Kingdom medical register, ending his career as a doctor. The study was eventually retracted by *The Lancet*, but not until 12 years had passed (*CMAJ*, 2010; Godlee, 2011). By that point, tens of thousands of parents around the world had hopped aboard the anti-vaccination bandwagon, placing their children at risk of possibly life-threatening illness.

Historically speaking, research ethics have improved considerably in the last half-century. Fifty years ago, a researcher observed casual encounters between gay men in public restrooms, secretly recorded the licence plates of participants, used police records to track their names and addresses, and went to the men's homes to interview them as part of a phony "health survey" (Humphrey, 1970). Such tactics are no longer acceptable. Another researcher invited recruits to participate in a "learning" experiment and then allowed them to imagine they were delivering strong electrical shocks to slow learners (Milgram, 1974). Despite ethics improvement, however, serious controversies still emerge. An award-winning investigation of police mistreatment of Black people in a US city is a recent illustration. The author was challenged for lacking veracity and participating in a serious felony during her sociological research (Goffman, 2015; Lubet, 2015; Neyfakh, 2015). As with most things, in research ethics, vigilance is key to improvement.

RESEARCH INVOLVING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Beyond these basic principles, Canadian researchers have special requirements for studies involving Indigenous peoples. For instance, along with individual consent, when proposed research may affect the welfare of the community to which participants belong, community



F. Royal/National Film Board of Canada/Library and Archives Canada

A doctor attends to an Indigenous boy as part of an experiment testing the effect of vitamins—and vitamin deprivation—on the Norway House Cree in northern Manitoba, 1942.

consultation is required. Such community engagement must recognize and respect Indigenous organizations and their leaders (York University, 2012). The reason for these special considerations is rooted in the history of unethical treatment of Indigenous peoples for the advancement of science (Mosby, 2013).

For example, in 1942, federal government researchers visiting remote reserve communities in northern Manitoba found the Indigenous people to be malnourished and demoralized (Mosby, 2013). Although the obvious response to a malnourished population under government care is to provide increased support, government researchers saw the situation as an opportunity for a field experiment. The researchers had encountered a ready-made laboratory that would allow them to learn how different nutritional supplements affected health outcomes.

The first experiments were conducted in 1942 on a population of 300 Norway House Cree in northern Manitoba. The experimental group of 125 children received vitamin supplements. The supplements were withheld from the control group. Recognizing that Indigenous children in government-controlled residential schools provided ideal experimental subjects, the research program spread. By 1947, experiments involving 1300 Indigenous students in six residential schools were in place in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. In some experiments, milk rations were reduced to half the recommended level for two years to observe the effects. In other research, different combinations of vitamin and mineral supplements were provided to one group and not another. Since an important indicator of health was measured by observing the state of students' gums, dental services were withdrawn from participating students since fixing the children's teeth and gums would contaminate the results.

When these experiments were conducted in the 1940s, codified ethics for the treatment of human subjects in scientific research were in their infancy. Still, we have to wonder how researchers could purposely deprive children in government care from adequate nutrition and health care. Did the researchers see these children only as experimental subjects and not as human beings? Did the fact that they were Indigenous contribute to their mistreatment? Or was the higher purpose of scientific advancement used to justify the means? Even today, the lead researcher's son defends his father's actions by rationalizing, "He was just trying to do good work" (Livingstone, 2013).

Much has changed since that time. In 2014, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) formed an Indigenous Advisory Circle comprising First Nations, Métis, and Inuit scholars from across the country, as well as an Indigenous Elder. Its mandate is to provide SSHRC's management with guidance from members of Indigenous communities and foster research that is conducted not only *with* Indigenous peoples but also *by* Indigenous peoples (SSHRC, 2019).

You now have a general understanding of how sociological research proceeds and the ethical issues it encounters. Now let's turn our attention to learning more about the details of the quantitative and qualitative research traditions.

Time for Review

- Someone claims, "You are a fool." Is this statement subjective or objective? What is required to turn it from one kind of statement into the other?
- Give an example of how an outsider's view of a hockey team differs from an insider's view.
- How would a positivist's view of your classroom differ from an interpretivist's view?
- Explain how induction and deduction connect abstract and concrete experience.
- Where do theoretical ideas fit in both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research?
- If your professor takes your class's final grades, analyzes sex differences in performance, and publishes the results, are any ethical codes being violated? If so, which ones?

Quantitative Approaches

Quantitative methods are used by sociologists who seek an objective understanding of social phenomena using the deductive approaches modelled after natural science. Quantitative researchers proceed by translating theoretical ideas into hypotheses, which are then tested through careful measurement and statistical analysis. Experiments and surveys are quantitative methods in sociology. Before describing them, we need to be clear about the place of variables and hypotheses in quantitative methods.

Measuring Variables

Quantitative methods begin at the abstract level and proceed to test theoretical ideas against empirical experience. For example, a researcher may have good theoretical reasons for proposing that people with more education earn higher incomes. This abstract proposition states the relationship between the concepts *education* and *income*.

Quantitative researchers immediately encounter a problem in testing abstract ideas. The problem exists because abstract concepts and propositions are imaginary. Has anyone ever seen, touched, heard, tasted, or smelled education? How about income? The reason we haven't experienced these concepts with our senses is that concepts are mental images.

To overcome this problem, quantitative researchers translate abstract propositions into testable forms through operationalization. **Operationalization** is the process by which a concept is translated into a variable. A **variable** is a measure of a concept that has more than one value or score. For example, consider the abstract concept *education*. Operationalization asks us to consider what variables would indicate whether one person is more or less educated than another. One operationalization might be *years of schooling*. What variables might be used to measure *income*? One possibility is *annual pre-tax income from employment and other sources*.

After operationalization, the original proposition, which expresses a relationship between concepts, is translated into a relationship between variables. The result of this translation is a hypothesis. For example, we could hypothesize that "people with more years of schooling have higher annual pre-tax income from employment and other sources." A **hypothesis** is the testable form of a proposition because you can imagine being able to experience (measure) different levels of the variables in concrete form. A hypothesis remains an educated guess insofar as we don't know how well it fits observable evidence. Evidence collected through research is used to test hypotheses. In quantitative research, experiments and surveys are methods for conducting such tests.

Operationalization is the process of translating concepts into variables and propositions into hypotheses.

A **variable** is a measure of a concept that has more than one value or score.

A **hypothesis** is the testable form of a proposition.

Experiments

Experiments are not widely used in sociological research, although some key insights have resulted from them. However, understanding experiments is important because it lays bare some fundamental principles of quantitative thinking that we apply to the analysis of other data, like surveys and official statistics (statistics collected by government bodies).

Experiments begin with a hypothesis about how one variable affects another. The variable considered the cause is called an **independent variable**, while the outcome or effect is identified as the **dependent variable**. An **experiment** is a carefully controlled artificial situation that allows researchers to isolate presumed causes and measure their effects precisely (Campbell and Stanley, 1963).

To identify the independent variable's effects on the dependent variable, experimenters first create two groups of subjects. They accomplish this task by **randomization**, which assigns individuals to the groups by chance. Randomization ensures that the two groups are alike in all respects. Next, experimenters measure both groups on the dependent variable. Experimenters then introduce the independent variable to only one of the groups. The independent variable is the hypothesized agent of change. The group experiencing the

An **independent variable** is the presumed cause in a cause-and-effect relationship.

A **dependent variable** is the presumed effect in a cause-and-effect relationship.

An **experiment** is a carefully controlled artificial situation that allows researchers to isolate hypothesized causes and measure their effects precisely.

Randomization in an experiment assigns individuals to the experimental or control group by chance processes. Randomization ensures that the two groups are alike in all respects.

The **experimental group** is the group that is exposed to the independent variable in an experiment.

The **control group** is the group that is not exposed to the independent variable in an experiment.

Validity is the degree to which results reflect reality.

Reliability is the degree to which procedures yield consistent results.

In a **survey**, sociologists ask respondents questions about their knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour, either in a face-to-face or telephone interview, online, or in a paper-and-pencil format.

A **sample** is the part of the population of research interest that is selected for analysis.

A **population** is the entire group about which the researcher wants to generalize.

In a **probability sample**, the units have a known and nonzero chance of being selected.

independent variable is called the **experimental group**. The group left alone is called the **control group**. The final step is to remeasure the dependent variable on the experimental and control groups after the independent variable has been administered to the experimental group. Because randomization ensured that the groups were initially alike in all respects, any observed change in the dependent variable is considered an effect of the independent variable.

Although the results of experimental procedures can be impressive, their application in sociology is limited. A key limitation centres on considerations of **validity**. Valid results are results that accurately reflect reality. **Reliability**, which refers to consistency of results, is a necessary condition for validity. A watch that is two minutes slow provides a reliable but invalid measure of time. If you glance at the watch again in several seconds, you get a similar, inaccurate report. Researchers who use hat size as a measure of intelligence also achieve consistent but invalid measures (Rushton and Ankney, 2009). Sociological researchers continually work at improving the reliability and validity of their measures of key concepts. Their aim, like that of a target shooter, is to hit the bull's eye (validity) consistently (reliability).

Surveys

Surveys are the most widely used sociological research method. In a **survey**, sociologists ask people about their knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour. All survey researchers aim to study part of a group—a **sample**—to learn about the whole group of interest—the **population**. To do so, sociologists often conduct telephone surveys. In organizational settings, either face-to-face interviews or self-administered questionnaires are common. In face-to-face interviews, a trained interviewer asks and records answers to a set of predetermined questions. In a self-administered survey, respondents read and provide their answers to predetermined questions on a paper questionnaire. Increasingly, questionnaires are available for completion online (Babbie et al., 2021).

SAMPLING

Survey methods benefit from high reliability; done properly, different surveys yield consistent results. This outcome is illustrated by the close clustering of opinion poll results near election times. Selecting representative samples is central to survey reliability.

To acquire a representative sample, researchers can't just recruit volunteers or select people who are easy to reach. The sample might contain a different proportion of older people, women, or British Columbians than the population in which they are interested. Instead, researchers must choose respondents who constitute a **probability sample**. Probability samples are samples in which every member of a population has a known, nonzero chance of being selected. While sample size is important, it may not need to be as large as you might think; the key is that it is representative. Usually in sociological research, a random sample of 1200 or 1500 people provides acceptably accurate results, no matter how large the population.

Creating a probability sample begins with a *sampling frame*, a list of all the people in the population of interest. A random selection method is then used to select individual cases. This process ensures that every person in the population has a known and nonzero chance of being selected. Creating sampling frames is a continuing challenge to survey researchers since most organizational membership lists are incomplete or outdated. For general population surveys, researchers typically rely on computer-generated random-digit dialling, which captures telephone numbers of all types (including unlisted numbers and cellphones). Still, this method is imperfect because it excludes persons without phones (about 3 percent of the population). For these reasons, disadvantaged groups such as homeless people are generally underrepresented in survey research studies. Beyond these issues, survey non-response has been a growing problem for several years for a variety of reasons including call display and survey fatigue. Sociologists at the Population Research Lab at the University of Alberta tracked declining response rates to their surveys over a span

of 16 years, finding it to be especially common among people with few years of formal education (Bladon, 2010).

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS

The meaning of *relationship* in research is the same as in everyday life. Relationships (or associations or correlations) exist when the changes in two things are systematically connected. If a change in your life systematically changes someone else's life, the two of you are related in some way.

Ultimately, quantitative researchers are interested in establishing *causal* relationships. To establish whether an independent variable causes a dependent variable, they must satisfy three conditions. First, they must determine that a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables. Second, they must be sure that the independent variable occurs before the dependent variable. Third, they must be confident that the independent variable and not the context in which the relationship occurs is responsible for the association between the independent and dependent variables. In research, a **control variable** specifies the context of a relationship.

To understand the third condition for establishing causality, consider that polio used to terrify people, paralyzing or killing millions between the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. Medical researchers were stumped. Were mosquitoes the cause? A food? An animal? Something else? Suspicions led New York City authorities to have 70 000 cats and 8000 dogs killed in 1916. Thanks to Dr. Jonas Salk, we now know that polio is a virus, but the introduction of the Salk vaccine in 1955 was still a few years away when a panicked public became apprehensive after noticing that polio cases became more frequent in summer, when people ate lots of ice cream. Ice cream sales plummeted (Williams, 2013).

In this case, people believed that ice cream was the independent variable (the cause) and polio was the dependent variable (the effect), as illustrated in the top half of Figure 2.2. However, when the Salk vaccine was introduced, it became clear what was really going on.

In summer, warm weather led children to eat more ice cream. But it also led them to come into more frequent contact with one another in outdoor play. As the bottom half of Figure 2.2 illustrates, eating ice cream didn't cause a spike in polio cases; increased contact among children did. In this instance, the frequency of contact between children may be regarded as a control variable, that is, the context in which the association between ice cream

Mikael Damkier/Shutterstock

Homelessness is increasingly a focus of public policy. But public support may not be adequate if homeless people are not counted properly. Statistics Canada first included a count of homeless people in the 2001 census. However, these numbers are only estimates because the count is based on information about the use of shelters and soup kitchens, combined with an attempt at street counts.

A **control variable** identifies the context of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable.

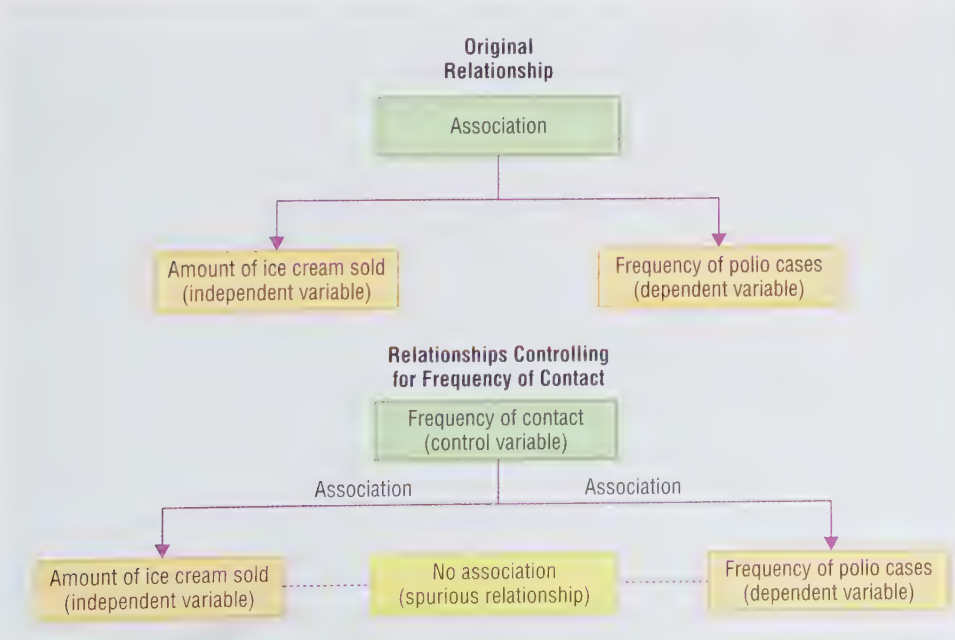
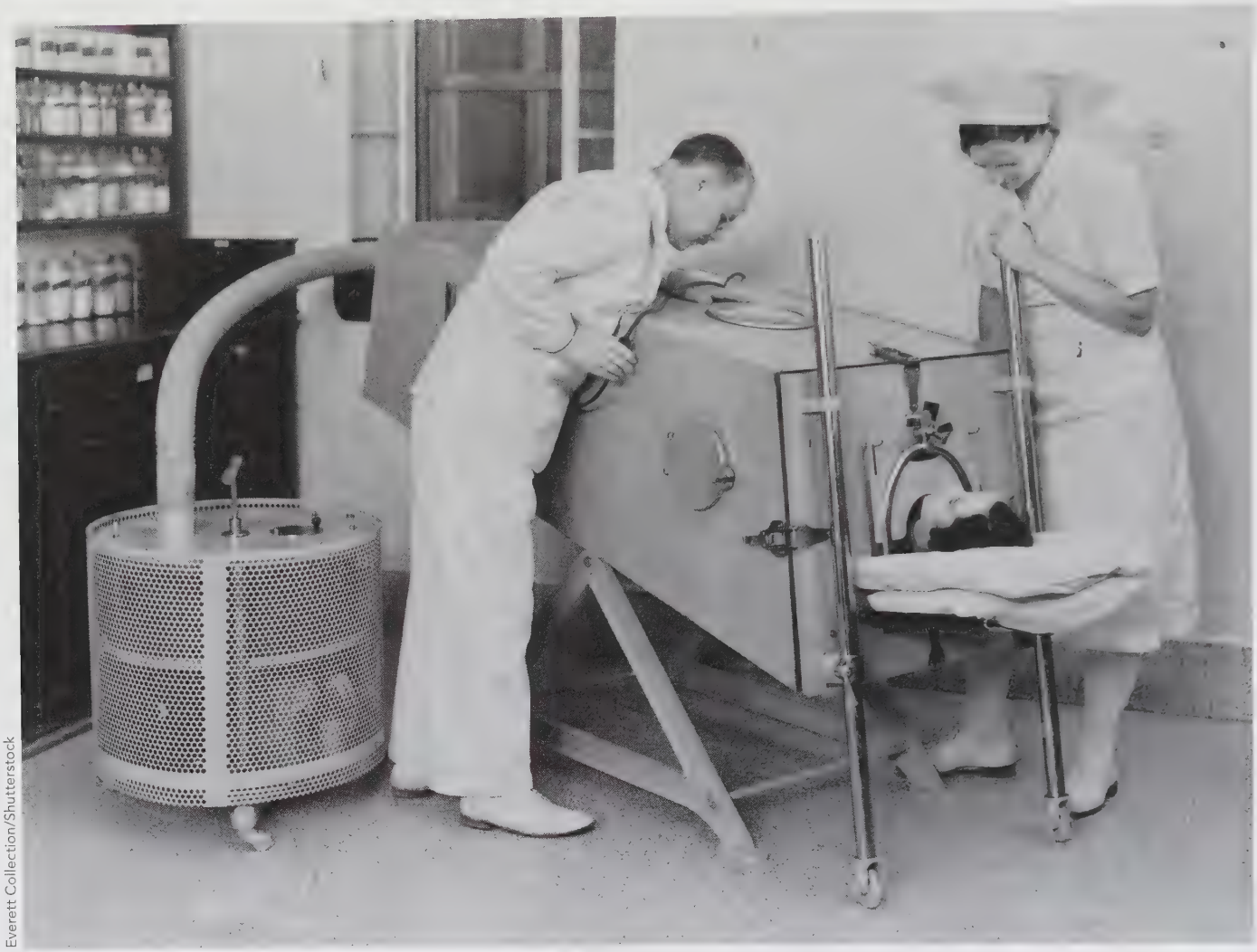

Original Relationship
Association
Amount of ice cream sold (independent variable)
Frequency of polio cases (dependent variable)
Relationships Controlling for Frequency of Contact
Frequency of contact (control variable)
Association
Association
Amount of ice cream sold (independent variable)
No association (spurious relationship)
Frequency of polio cases (dependent variable)

FIGURE 2.2
Ice Cream and Polio: A Spurious Relationship



Everett Collection/Shutterstock

Polio victim in an iron lung, 1940. The polio virus weakened the muscles used for breathing and relegated some patients to these large breathing machines.

The relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable is said to be **spurious** when a control variable is associated with change in both the independent and dependent variables.

sales and polio cases existed. Once people took it into account, the relationship between ice cream and polio was recognized as inauthentic, phony or what researchers call **spurious**. *Spuriousness occurs when change in a control variable causes change in both the independent and dependent variables and erases the association between the independent and dependent variables*. Researchers try to account for all the control variables that may plausibly affect the association between the independent and dependent variables that interest them because they want to be assured that the association is really causal. So remember, if you observe a correlation, you are not necessarily observing causation.

Official Statistics and the Canadian Census

Official statistics include data that are collected and analyzed by government agencies, such as unemployment records and the census.

Government agencies collect data for many purposes—to measure prices, crime, and unemployment; allocate money for health care, policing, and education; and so on. **Official statistics** are a rich source of data for academic researchers, businesses, and government agencies. They are inexpensive to obtain and they can be analyzed with ease. However, they also have downsides: they do not always fit the interests of researchers, and in some cases they are biased or incomplete (see the discussion of crime statistics in Chapter 7, Deviance and Crime).

The most frequently used source of official statistics is the census. It differs from surveys in that it is designed to measure the entire population, fielded at regular intervals, and compulsory. The penalty for refusing to participate can be as high as $500 (Hannay, 2018).

A Canada-wide census was conducted every 10 years from 1871 to 1951 and every five years thereafter. In recent decades, Statistics Canada has issued two types of census questionnaires, a short and a long form. The short form consists of eight basic questions about the respondent's age, sex, and the like. The long form consists of about 60 questions on topics such as home life, health, work, religion, and ethnicity. Statistics Canada distributes the short form to all households. It distributes the long form to 20 percent of households chosen at random.

However, in 2010 the federal Conservative government announced that, beginning in 2011, it would replace the mandatory long-form census with a voluntary *National Household Survey* (NHS) distributed to 33 percent of households. The government justified its decision by declaring the long-form census to be a violation of privacy rights. Scrapping the census elicited opposition from a wide range of interest groups, including provincial, territorial, and municipal governments; ethnic and religious bodies; community organizations; unions; and academic and professional organizations. In contrast, public opinion was ambivalent. And the business community's voice was largely silent because information sources had changed dramatically over the preceding decades. Business could now access alternative, current, market-specific data from computers, smartphones, and other personal technologies. Census data were increasingly irrelevant to business (Brym, 2014a).

With the business lobby offering little opposition, the Conservative government proceeded with the voluntary survey in 2011. As sociologists and other experts predicted, the survey resulted in a dramatic decline in data quality. Ninety-four percent of eligible adults took part in the 2006 census, compared to just 68 percent in the 2011 NHS. Disadvantaged communities had significantly lower participation rates, so their number was underestimated and their characteristics known with less certainty. This had negative implications for the funding and delivery of educational and social services, which are based on population counts.

A Liberal government reinstated the mandatory long-form census as soon as it was returned to power in 2015. The 97.8 percent response rate in the 2016 census was their best ever recorded, fuelled by a world record for online (as opposed to pen-and-paper) responses (Statistics Canada, 2016b). Still, academics, policymakers, and other census consumers are left with knowledge gaps. Are changes observed between 2006 and 2011 the result of real social trends or of low-quality 2011 data? This issue underscores the importance of high-quality empirical evidence for shaping public policy. To achieve that aim, Statistics Canada is considering ending the short-form census by 2026 and replacing it with other forms of official government data.

Qualitative Approaches

Qualitative approaches are used by sociologists who seek a subjective understanding of social phenomena using inductive reasoning. According to Max Weber, to understand social experience one must appreciate how people subjectively define and interpret their own and others' actions. Empathy is thus key to understanding. That is, understanding human social experience requires using one's imagination to become aware of the internal life of others.

Qualitative research is a broad category that includes several methods. We now introduce you to two of them: participant observation and qualitative interviewing. We begin with their approach to sampling.

SAMPLING

A key feature distinguishing qualitative and quantitative research is their approach to sampling. Qualitative researchers are far less likely to rely on probability sampling. Generalizing

findings to the whole population is not necessarily their goal. Moreover, the people in whom they are interested often make up smaller and harder-to-reach segments of the population.

Purposive sampling involves the researcher's best judgment to locate members of the population of interest.

In **purposive sampling**, sociologists who know a population well use their best judgment to decide which individuals or groups might be most appropriate for their research. For example, research on LGBTQ+ communities often employs purposive samples. Subjects might be found by contacting members of online social media groups. In **snowball sampling**, researchers take advantage of social networks to locate subjects, so a person who is interviewed is asked to suggest names of additional people who might be willing to participate in the study. For example, a study of recovering alcoholics might well use this approach because recovering alcoholics often share the same network of friends and acquaintances whom they have met through the recovery process.

Snowball sampling relies on existing participants to suggest additional subjects who might be willing to participate.

Participant Observation

In participant observation, researchers participate in the activities of the social group being studied and, while part of the action, systematically observe what occurs and why. The goal of participant observation (sometimes referred to as *ethnography*) is to experience and understand what it is like to be a member of a community. Increasingly, online communities, such as online video gamers, are the focus of ethnographic research.

In a classic participant observation study, researchers had themselves admitted to 12 psychiatric hospitals under false pretenses (Rosenhan, 1973). They complained they heard voices saying "empty," "hollow," and "thud." None of the psychiatric, nursing, or custodial staff knew they were anything but newly admitted patients. During the course of the researchers' stay, their participation in the organization's routines and observation of their own and others' experiences taught them much about how defining someone "mentally ill" by itself shapes the way others interpret and react to the actions of people so labelled.

DETERMINING THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

How involved will the participant observer become with the group being studied? At one end of the continuum, researchers can participate fully in all its activities. At the other end, they can restrict themselves just to observing. More frequently, they fall somewhere between these extremes. When acting as completely engaged participants, they conceal their identity as researchers from community members. Selecting this role has advantages and disadvantages. The biggest advantage is that it minimizes problems of **reactivity**. Reactivity refers to observed people concealing certain things or exaggerating their authentic actions in an effort to impress the researcher. One reason the study of mental institutions cited earlier is so compelling is that the staff didn't know the participants were researchers. If they had known, you can easily imagine how the staff would have adjusted their actions.

Reactivity occurs when the presence of a researcher causes the observed people to conceal certain things or act artificially to impress the researcher.

However, the role of completely engaged participant involves serious ethical concerns. For instance, how would you feel if you learned that one of your sexual encounters had been observed by an unidentified researcher? You can imagine how people reacted when one sociologist conducted an infamous participant observation study in just this way, as noted earlier (Babbie, 2004; Humphreys, 1970).

Less immersed in the social setting is the *participant as observer*. In this form, members of the study group know the researcher's status and goals. Until the researcher gains the trust of participants, this role heightens reactivity concerns but reduces ethical breaches. With time and sensitivity, reactivity is reduced, and the role can yield useful insights about communities of interest. Canadian illustrations of this approach include an investigation of Toronto raves, a study of youth gangs, and an inquiry into the work of scientists in the Arctic (Wilson, 2002; Clancey, 2001; Totten, 2001). The pure observer role is rarely used, since non-participation denies the researcher the kind of insider experience that is key to qualitative investigations.

GAINING ACCESS AND IDENTIFYING KEY INFORMANTS

A key challenge for participant observers is gaining access, which varies in difficulty depending upon how open or closed the community being studied is; recovering drug addicts

are more difficult to access than university students. There are no foolproof keys for gaining access to closed communities. Strategic plans and perseverance are usually necessary, but good luck often plays an important role. Moreover, most groups have "gatekeepers" whose role is to control access to the community.

After gaining entry into a community, how do researchers become oriented in their unfamiliar surroundings? **Key informants** are insiders who can help guide the researcher through the community.

Key informants are community members who are willing and able to provide credible information about an organization's culture, issues, and activities.

Beyond the tasks of gaining access, participant observers take detailed field notes and, in the inductive tradition, examine them for patterns, a process too extensive to cover here. However, as our overview of participant observation suggests, the inductive techniques used to interpret field notes are less rigid than those used in quantitative analysis. Greater flexibility creates opportunities for creative insight and expression. Later we discuss the study of a kink community that illustrates this advantage.

Qualitative Interviewing

Usually, survey researchers use **structured interviews**. In structured interviews, all the questions are crafted in advance of the interview to measure specific variables, and answers are *closed-ended*, meaning that subjects must select from a fixed set of responses. The variables are components of hypotheses that, in turn, reflect the theoretical ideas being tested.

Structured interviews follow carefully crafted protocols to acquire the respondent's view on predetermined subjects.

In contrast, qualitative researchers use **unstructured** or **semi-structured interviews** that resemble a conversation. The questioning has a theme and covers pre-defined topics, but the questions vary in form to suit the flow of the interview and they are *open-ended* for the most part. That is, while structured interviews seek specific information, unstructured questions probe to encourage respondents to share their thoughts, feelings, actions, and events in their own words.

Unstructured or **semi-structured interviews** resemble conversations with predefined themes and topics, and they allow respondents to answer questions in their own words.

By virtue of its inductive nature, qualitative interviewing is well suited to **exploratory research**, that is, research that seeks to formulate theories about the subject of interest rather than test theories in the rigorous manner of quantitative research. Qualitative interviewing is also well suited to studying potentially sensitive topics and socially marginalized groups.

Exploratory research is research that seeks to formulate theories about the subject of interest rather than test theories in the rigorous manner of quantitative research.

An example is puppy play, which originated in gay and bisexual male kink communities. Kink involves bondage, discipline, domination, submission, and sadomasochism—pleasure from suffering and/or inflicting pain (Newmahr, 2010). People who engage in puppy play adopt the roles of dog and master, including sleeping in kennels and being given food to eat out of a dog bowl. Puppy play entered mainstream consciousness through the lighthearted British television documentary *The Secret Life of Human Pups* (Firecracker Films, 2016), online news media (Bieschke, 2015; Nichols, 2016), participation in pride marches, and groups like Vancouver Pups and Handlers.

The world's first sociological study of puppy play was conducted by two sociologists using a symbolic interactionist framework and semi-structured interviews of 30 gay and bisexual men (Wignall and McCormack, 2017). Interview subjects were initially located purposively through pup-related information in their profiles on social and sexual networking sites, while snowball sampling helped to locate additional participants. They were asked to describe things like the way that they define puppy play and how they got into it. The researchers produced transcripts of the men's responses, categorized them by themes, and were able to define puppy play as a mild form of sadomasochism between mutually consenting adults who usually discover it through interaction with someone who is already part of the puppy play scene. Moreover, while some enthusiasts engage in it for sexual satisfaction, they also view it as a form of escape from otherwise normal daily lives. According to one participant:

> The headspace is relaxing. It's a way of letting go. "Oh, you have a big interview tomorrow? Who cares, I'm going to act like a puppy." It's also nice the other way around.

Kennedy News & Media

A scene from *The Secret Life of Human Pups*, London, 2016

> You're in the middle of a presentation? Who cares, you just need to remember that yesterday you were a puppy crawling on the floor. (Wignall and McCormack, 2017: 807) •

The study also debunked the common myth that puppy play reflects an interest in zoophilia (sex between humans and other animals), which the subjects soundly rejected.

Another way of conducting interviews is in a **focus group**, which involves about 10 to 12 participants gathering to discuss a particular topic. The discussion is guided by a moderator who leads the discussion and ensures that everyone has a chance to speak. For example, using a feminist theoretical framework, two sociologists of health combined focus groups with semi-structured interviews to determine how women use digital health technologies, including phone apps and Internet-enabled wearable devices such as Fitbit and Apple Watch. They gained access to their subjects through a community forum that was advertised among different health groups connected to a nonprofit women's health organization. Most of the participants reported accessing information about digital technologies through websites and social media. They found these sites allowed them to connect with other women, often anonymously, about health-related issues. Most of them said the sites enabled them to develop a stronger sense of control over their bodies but were not regarded as a replacement for formal medical advice (Lupton and Maslen, 2019).

Focus groups are group interviews in which a small number of individuals discuss a specific issue under the guidance of a moderator.

Qualitative researchers use authenticity, rather than validity and reliability, as the criterion for judging their work. **Authenticity** refers to whether their narrative provides a genuine description of social realities as experienced by participants. In qualitative research, authenticity has the same meaning as it does when analyzing quantitative data or in relation to research ethics. Across these different topics, when something is inauthentic, appearances do not match reality. Qualitative studies are attractive because they provide readers with a full sense of the lives of others.

Authenticity is the extent to which qualitative investigation captures social realities as experienced by insiders.

The roster of research methods we have outlined is far from complete, but the methods we have discussed, as well as those we haven't, generally fit within the positivist or interpretive traditions. Therefore, every study is characterized by the strengths and weaknesses of its viewpoint and associated strategies of inquiry. Table 2.1 contrasts the basic considerations underlying the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

We note in concluding this part of our discussion that one way to balance the strengths and weaknesses of each approach is by means of **mixed methods**, involving the collection and analysis of quantitative *and* qualitative data. Mixed methods are gaining in popularity as sociologists seek to overcome the drawbacks of any one method and fully address their research questions.

Mixed methods combine qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study.

TABLE 2.1

Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
Methodological Tradition	Positivist	Interpretive
Viewpoint	Outsider	Insider
General Approach	Structured	Flexible
Logical Approach	Deduction	Induction
Connection to Theory	Theory testing	Theory generating
Sample Size	Large	Small
Sample Selection	Representative	Illustrative
Scope	Few variables	Many variables
Breadth	Multi-context generalization	Context-specific analysis
Goal	Explanation	Understanding
Methodological Emphasis	Reliability and validity	Authenticity
Nature of Evidence	Numbers and statistics	Narratives

Source: Based on Babbie et al., 2021. Fundamentals of Social Research, 5CE (Nelson).

Time for Review

- How can reactivity affect a photograph you take of your mother?
- If you wanted to complete a participant observation study of a biker gang, how might you gain access?
- What strategy could a groom use for taking field notes at his wedding ceremony?
- How do interviews used in quantitative studies differ from qualitative interviews?

Digital Sociology

Digital sociology is a new and rapidly growing field of interest, having emerged about a decade ago (Marres, 2017). It focuses on the ways in which digital technology is central to social life and offers a unique methodological approach to research. Digital sociology might involve anything from qualitative coding of Twitter posts or Instagram photos to charting Google search trends. In this sense, it is part of a broader category of research methods traditionally referred to as **nonreactive** or unobtrusive because they do not influence the subjects involved.

Digital sociology uses digital technology as both a tool and subject of research.

Nonreactive methods involve studying social life without affecting the behaviour of the people involved.

Digital sociology relies on bits of information that people leave behind when they use cellphones, tablets, and computers. Google searches do not disappear into thin air; Google saves them. Twitter, YouTube, and other apps also collect all manner of information about users. Even purchasing coffee with a debit card leaves a digital fingerprint that is invisible to purchasers but identifies them and their purchase to the coffee shop and the bank that issued the card (Salganik, 2018: 71). The digital traces left behind constitute a massive amount of data accessible to researchers (see Table 2.2).

Social media form a major repository of digital traces. Refuse to touch a cellphone or Instagram? You'll leave far fewer traces. But your purchase at the gas station, your visit to the doctor, and your bank account deposit will be electronically logged. In 2021, it would take extraordinary lengths to spend as little as a day without leaving a trace of where you went or what you did. Try it and see how long you can remain invisible in the digital world.

The sum of everyone's digital traces is commonly known as *big data*. When sociologists analyze big data, they must use computers because the data sets are massive (Selwyn, 2019: 73). As the digital traces of billions of actions are aggregated into big data, what sorts of patterns can be revealed about social life? Let's examine a recent example from popular culture.

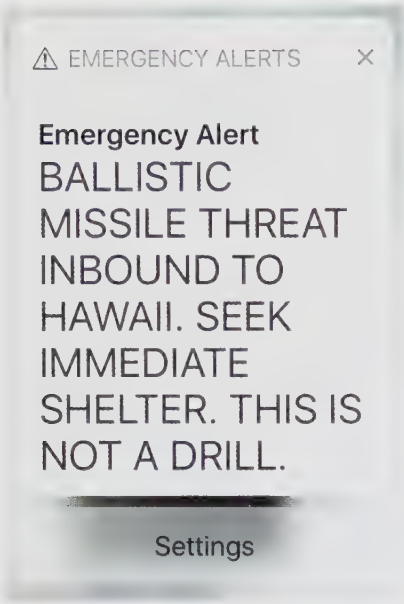
From Private Behaviours to Big Data: Sociological Insights from Big Data

At 8:07 am on Saturday, January 13, 2018, many residents of Hawaii briefly thought they were about to die. Their phones pinged with an official alert that a ballistic missile attack was imminent. Amid tensions with North Korea, the United States was already on edge.

TABLE 2.2
Internet Activity Worldwide, by Website, 2020

	Website				
Internet Activity	**Google Searches**	**Twitter Posts**	**Instagram Uploads**	**Tumblr Posts**	**YouTube Views**
Per second	82 944	8 979	992	1 702	84 120
Per minute	5.0 million	536 740	59 520	102 120	5.0 million
Per hour	298 million	32.3 million	3.6 million	6.1 million	303 million
Per day	7.2 billion	776 million	85.7 million	147 million	7.3 billion

Source: Internetlivestats.com.


EMERGENCY ALERTS
Emergency Alert
BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.
Settings

EPA/Canadian Press

Realizing quickly that an error had been made, news stations urged everyone to remain calm. But it wasn't until 8:45 a.m. that residents were sent another official message from the Hawaiian Emergency Management Agency to confirm that the alert was a mistake. So what did Hawaiians do when they thought that a missile was about to strike?

One thing we know for sure is that they stopped watching porn. Based in Montréal, Pornhub is one of the world's largest online portals for pornography. The company is so big it even has its own statistical division. Compared with the previous two Saturdays, Hawaiian traffic to Pornhub's website plummeted 60 percent in the moments after the false alert was sent and by as much as 77 percent by 8:23 a.m. Yet by 9:01 a.m., traffic had jumped to 48 percent above the average for that time of day, perhaps a sign of users looking for stress relief—or at least seeking to make up for precious moments lost due to temporary fear of thermonuclear war (Pornhub Insights, 2018a). Other insights into porn viewing habits during major events show that during Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's royal wedding in 2018, online porn usage fell by 10 percent worldwide and 21 percent in the United Kingdom (Pornhub Insights, 2018b). During the evening of the Canadian 2019 federal election, while results were trickling in, Canadian traffic on Pornhub slowed by 10 percent, again with a compensatory jump after the winner was declared (see Figure 2.3).

Of course, not everyone in Hawaii, the United Kingdom, or Canada visits Pornhub regularly to begin with; but these results suggest that those who do tend to curtail their visits during major public events. We do know that many people visit Pornhub, though. Pornhub Insights reports that by 2018, they received over 33.5 *billion* video views per year (92 million per day), or about 12.5 videos for everyone on Earth. In 2017, there were more votes cast for the year's favourite Pornhub video (120 million) than in the preceding US presidential election (Pornhub Insights, 2018c). Canadians are heavy users of the site, in fifth place behind people in the United States, the United Kingdom, India, and Japan in 2018. About one-quarter of Pornhub's visitors are women. In fact, women's search patterns might surprise some people. While "lesbian" is Pornhub's most popular video category throughout North America, women are about 1.5 times as likely as men to select it (Pornhub Insights, 2018c).

Wait—what? Before you read any further, go back and take a look at the last few sentences again. Think about them critically from a methodological standpoint. What's missing here?

How can we know what types of searches women make compared to men? How would Pornhub know a visitor's gender? One guess might be that viewers register their personal information with the site. Some do, but it is a small fraction of total visitors—there are "only" about 20 million registered profiles. The answer lies in technology. Pornhub does not actually know if most of its visitors are male, female, young, old, and so on. Instead, they rely on data analysis to make highly accurate guesses. Most commercial websites use tracking cookies, in part to target you with online advertisements. All of those visits to travel sites, men's online shoe stores, and, of course, social media create a trail that allows companies to work out your gender, income, age, and other demographic characteristics through a series of mathematical computations. That is how Pornhub knows whether men or women are more likely to search *hentai*, *MILFs*, and so on.

Twitter has been a particularly valuable source of big data for social researchers, especially as it has tended to be more willing than Facebook to share its data. The COVID-19 pandemic quickly led to a flurry of analyses concerning the infodemic. One of the early sociological analyses divided tweets into several categories, including false information (such as conspiracy ideas), science-based evidence, and fact-checking tweets (aimed at debunking false information). An analysis of 942 tweets revealed that false information was tweeted more often than science-based evidence or fact-checking tweets, but was retweeted less often. Twitter subsequently made a much larger set of its data available to qualified researchers, signalling increasing collaboration between social media giants and academic researchers in light of social media's role in spreading both true and false scientific information.

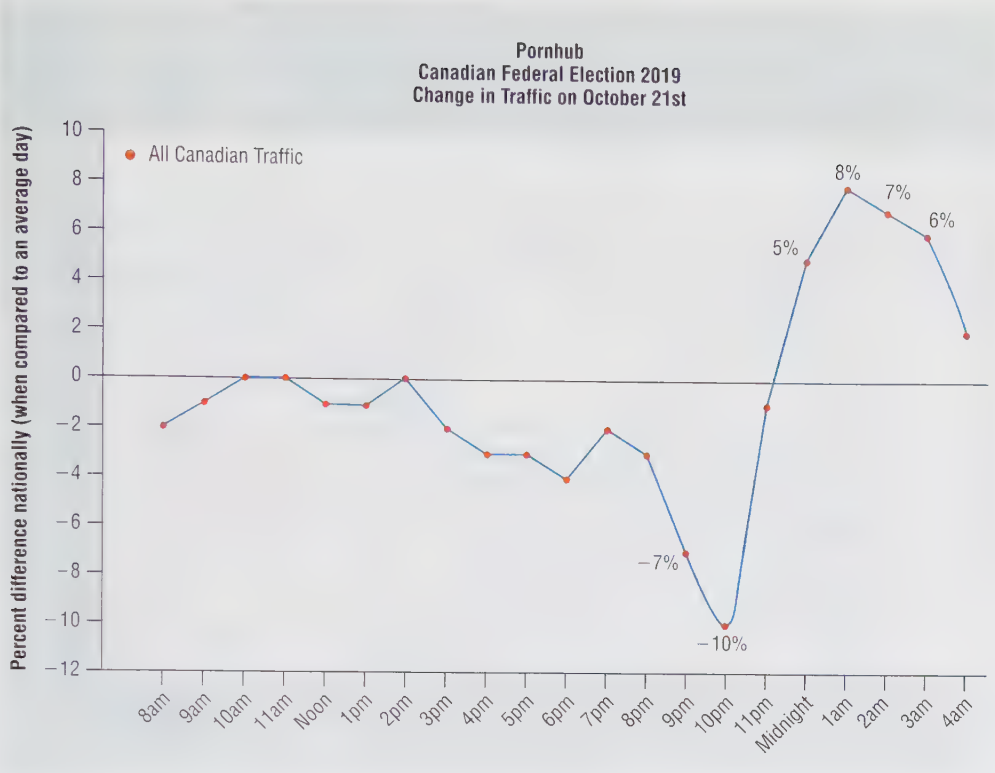


FIGURE 2.3
Change in Traffic on Pornhub on October 21, 2019, the Canadian Federal Election

Pornhub Insights, 2019.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BIG DATA

In a bestselling book, former Google data scientist Seth Stephens-Davidowitz (2017) calls Web searches "digital truth serum" because of the ways they can reveal people's secret interests and activities, such as googling racist jokes. Most people feel anonymous on the Internet, so big data have the potential to reduce a particular form of reactivity known as **social desirability bias**. It is the bane of survey research in that respondents will often underreport or hide things that might make them look bad in the eyes of others, such as racist beliefs, and report only things that make them look good. Other advantages of big data for social researchers include the fact that some big data are accessible to anyone with Internet access. The data are free. They eliminate the sampling bias caused by some people not responding to questionnaires (respondents may differ from non-respondents in ways crucial to the research question). Ethical approval is not needed. And in the digital era, big data say a lot about online behaviour, which has become a major type of social interaction for many people (see Box 2.2).

Social desirability bias is error that results from respondents' tendencies to answer in ways that will make them look favourable to the researcher.

A disadvantage of big data is that they aren't representative of the general population because some people—particularly low-income earners, seniors, and people living in less developed countries—are less likely to be Internet users than are other categories of the population. Big data can also house a lot of "dirty data" (spam, fake social media profiles, and duplicate posts or searches by the same individual).

And ethical issues exist when using big data. This is particularly the case when it comes to potential breaches of private and/or sensitive information such as porn viewing habits. Another ethical concern is the potential for harm from the sorts of emotionally manipulative experiments that have been performed by companies without acquiring informed consent. For instance, in cooperation with university researchers, Facebook users' newsfeeds were given a positive or negative slant to determine the degree to which emotions are contagious. A little later, OkCupid users were lied to about potential matches to test the site's compatibility theory (Hern, 2014).

BOX 2.2 Social Policy

TO CATCH A THIEF: USING BIG DATA TO HELP REDUCE SELF-CHECKOUT LOSSES

haroldguevara/Shutterstock

Sociologists have been relatively slow to take advantage of big data's research potential. That is partly because they do not collect or have access to the same variety of data that large companies do. One avenue for sociologists to apply their data analytic skills is to work in partnership with the private sector. A recent mixed methods study by British criminologist Adrian Beck (2018) revealed how private companies' inventory data combined with qualitative interviewing can help us understand at least one form of technology-mediated retail theft.

Chances are you've used self-scan and checkout (SCO) technology at a grocery store. The technology has become increasingly common as a means to reduce labour costs. However, a disadvantage is the increased potential for theft, particularly for SCOs that require customers to scan and weigh items themselves. Criminologists suspect that self-scanner thieves are not typical shoplifters but otherwise honest individuals who are tempted by an easy opportunity to steal. They justify their behaviour through the notion that their scanning and bagging labour "earns" them free products, particularly when they mis-scan items and get frustrated. They might also convince themselves that companies like Walmart are rich enough already, or "everyone does it anyway." Beck refers to their practices as "rationally justified self-administered discounting" (p. 3). Fellow criminologist Emmeline Taylor (2016) calls them SWIPERS, or "Seemingly Well-Intentioned Patrons Engaging in Routine Shoplifting."

Beck studied customers in Walmart and various large grocery chains in the United States, Continental Europe, and the United Kingdom. Theft is a socially undesirable behaviour, and studying it by means of a customer survey would likely yield biased and therefore invalid results. So Beck took a different approach that involved the following methods:

- Qualitative interviews with 73 key informants in the retail industry
- Visits to 11 stores to observe SCO technologies in use
- Quantitative data on 140 million SCO transactions, 17 million transaction audits, and 486 000 unscanned items
- Video analytics of SCO transactions worth 72 billion euros (CAD$106 billion)
- Data from thousands of retail stores on loss of inventory

Beck found that losses associated with SCOs were high—as much as 147 percent higher in grocery stores that had them compared to those without, especially if they did not have a weight-checking system. So *how* are people stealing? Key informants from the companies and SCO providers described five main ways in which people steal while using SCOs:

- Passing the item over the scanning area but ensuring the bar code is not read, then placing it in the bagging area undetected.
- Scanning items correctly but triggering the completion of the transaction without making payment.
- Mis-scanning by weighing a bag of, say, grapes, but punching in something less expensive like carrots.
- Barcode switching, that is, selecting a less expensive brand of something like shampoo for scanning but placing a more expensive brand of the same item into the bag.
- Coupon fraud, that is, using the same coupon several times.

Now that we have just taught you how to become a grocery thief, think about another question. How do we know for sure *what* they are stealing, and *how much*? The basic answer is that stores do not know for certain. The way that they can get an approximate answer is by conducting inventory and comparing it to their SCO transactions data. However, the less often they do inventory, the less reliable their results. According to the inventory data Beck received, the most commonly non-scanned items by quantity are likely to be reusable bags, followed by loose bananas, milk, and other fruits and vegetables. By value, he found something altogether different. Beer topped the list, followed by bananas and chicken. In total, Beck's analyses suggested that store losses from SCO technology could be as high as 5 percent of all sales, which for large chains reaches many millions of dollars.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Does the advent of big data make surveys obsolete?
2. In what ways did the use of mixed methods enhance the validity of Beck's study?

Perhaps the most publicized big data debate in Canada is the federal government's increasing reliance on private business data for official statistics. In October 2018, Global News reported that Statistics Canada planned on creating a massive personal financial information database by harvesting the personal banking data of half a million Canadians from international credit bureau TransUnion. Sensitive information such as social insurance numbers, amount owing on credit cards, overdue loan payments, and mortgage balances were to be harvested from private financial institutions without customers' knowledge or consent (Russell and Akin, 2018). Although doing so would be legal under recent amendments to the Statistics Act, it created tremendous public outcry. Canada's privacy commissioner launched an investigation of Statistics Canada's decision. In the meantime, the plan to access banking data was delayed indefinitely. Most Canadians probably do not realize the extent to which their banking data is already being shared widely with companies like Equifax, a major credit reporting agency, which suffered a serious privacy breach in 2018.

In defence of Statistics Canada's move, University of Manitoba economist Greg Mason (2018) pointed out that the government needs official statistics to carry out public policy, and better official statistics mean better public policy. For example, knowing how much Canadians are paying for groceries, rent, and utilities would allow the government to calculate a more accurate consumer price index to measure price increases, which would in turn allow the Bank of Canada to set interest rates that are more beneficial to economic growth. Given Canadians' growing reluctance to participate in surveys and the rising cost of surveys, Statistics Canada's strategy should not come as a surprise.

Finally, although they do not receive as much attention as big data, some of the most innovative digital social research over the past decade has emerged from the qualitative tradition. An example is Bonnie Stewart's (2018) use of participant observation to understand how academics use Twitter to network and communicate with others. While it is impossible to cover the full range of research methods in a single chapter, you will be seeing examples of approaches like digital ethnography and content analysis throughout this book. This chapter provides you with the tools you need to appreciate what follows.

Time for Review

- What are the main ethical challenges of using big data compared with surveys?

The Importance of Being Subjective

You now have a pretty good idea of the basic methodological issues that confront any sociological research project. You also understand the strengths and weaknesses of the different research traditions.

Our synopsis of sociology's tools for checking the reality status of ideas should not obscure the fact that sociological research questions often spring from real-life experiences and the pressing concerns of the day. However, before any sociological analysis occurs, we rarely see things as they are. We see them as we are. Then, a sort of waltz begins. Subjectivity leads; objectivity follows. When the dance is finished, we see things more accurately.

Feminism provides a prime example of this process. Feminism is a political movement of people and ideas that, since the 1960s, has helped shape the sociological research agenda. For example, before the rise of the modern feminist movement, many concerns were considered sociological non-issues, such as the division of labour in the household, violence against women, the effects of child-rearing responsibilities on women's careers, and the social barriers to women's participation in politics and the armed forces. Effectively, the issues did not exist for the sociological community (although they did, of course, exist for women). However, subjectivity led. Feminism, as a political movement, brought these concerns and many others to the attention of the Canadian public. Objectivity followed.

Large parts of the sociological community began doing rigorous research on feminist-inspired issues and greatly refined our knowledge of them.

The entire sociological perspective began to shift as a growing number of scholars abandoned gender-biased research (Eichler, 1988b; Tavris, 1992), so approaching sociological problems from an exclusively male perspective is now less common than it once was. For instance, it is less likely in 2021 than it was in 1971 that a sociologist studying work would ignore unpaid housework as one type of labour. Similarly, sociologists now frown on using data on one gender to draw conclusions about all people. As these advances in sociological thinking show, and as has often been the case in the history of the discipline, objective sociological knowledge has been enhanced as a result of subjective experiences. And so the waltz continues. As in *Alice in Wonderland*, the question now is "Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?"

Time for Review

- What roles do subjectivity and objectivity play in conducting sociological research?

Summary

1. **What are common mistakes in unscientific thinking?**
   Mistakes in unscientific thinking include casual observation, relying on tradition, and blindly trusting authority. In inquiry, these errors lead to overgeneralization, selective observation, and illogical reasoning. They produce results that are invalid interpretations of reality.

2. **What are the meaning and components of different levels of experience?**
   Concrete experiences are empirical and relate to your five senses. Abstract experiences are imaginary and occur in your mind. Making connections between abstract and concrete levels of experience forms realities that are described and interpreted by sociological research methods.

3. **What are the major steps in qualitative and quantitative research?**
   Qualitative research proceeds inductively: (a) Identify a research interest based on concrete experience. (b) Collect evidence from one or more cases of the same type. (c) Analyze the cases to identify common patterns and themes. (d) Use sociological concepts and principles to provide an interpretation of the patterns and themes, stressing the context in which the experience took place.

4. **What are the major steps in quantitative research?**
   Quantitative research proceeds deductively: (a) Identify a theoretical idea of interest. (b) Translate the abstract idea into a testable hypothesis. (c) Collect and analyze data. (d) Accept or reject the hypothesis based on the data analysis.

5. **How do people's viewpoints shape their understanding?**
   Viewpoints radically shape experience. A principal distinction exists between insider and outsider viewpoints. Insiders are people who are members of a particular group or community. They have a detailed understanding of their social setting. Outsiders are persons who do not belong to a particular group or community. They are often able to see broader, more general patterns of organization.

6. **What ethical norms guide sociological research?**
   Sociological research is guided by ethical principles, including voluntary participation, harm minimization, privacy, and authenticity. Voluntary participation and harm minimization are included in informed consent, which means that subjects must be aware of possible negative consequences and freely decide to participate. Privacy requires anonymity or at least confidentiality of participant identifiers. Authenticity requires that both participants and consumers of research be honestly informed about research procedures and results.

7. **How are experimental and survey methods used by quantitative researchers?**
   Experimental and survey methods are data collection techniques often used by quantitative researchers. Both procedures test hypotheses about how variables are related among carefully selected participants. The results are subject to statistical analyses that lead to either confirmation or rejection of hypotheses.

8. **How do qualitative researchers use participant observation and interviewing methods?**
   Both participant observation and interviewing procedures gather insider information about the meaning and motives of participants' experience. Researchers use inductive procedures to analyze the results. In doing so, they look for common themes that indicate context-specific understanding.

9. **What is digital sociology and what are its strengths and weaknesses?**
   Digital sociology treats digital technologies like Twitter and Google as sources of data and a topic of study in its own right. Its strengths include the fact that digital data can reveal hidden thoughts or behaviours such as racist beliefs, and large numbers of people can be observed without the high cost of surveys. Disadvantages include the fact that digital data aren't always representative and they often contain fake profiles and other types of dirty data.

PART 2
Basic Social Processes

CHAPTER 3
Culture

CHAPTER 4
Socialization

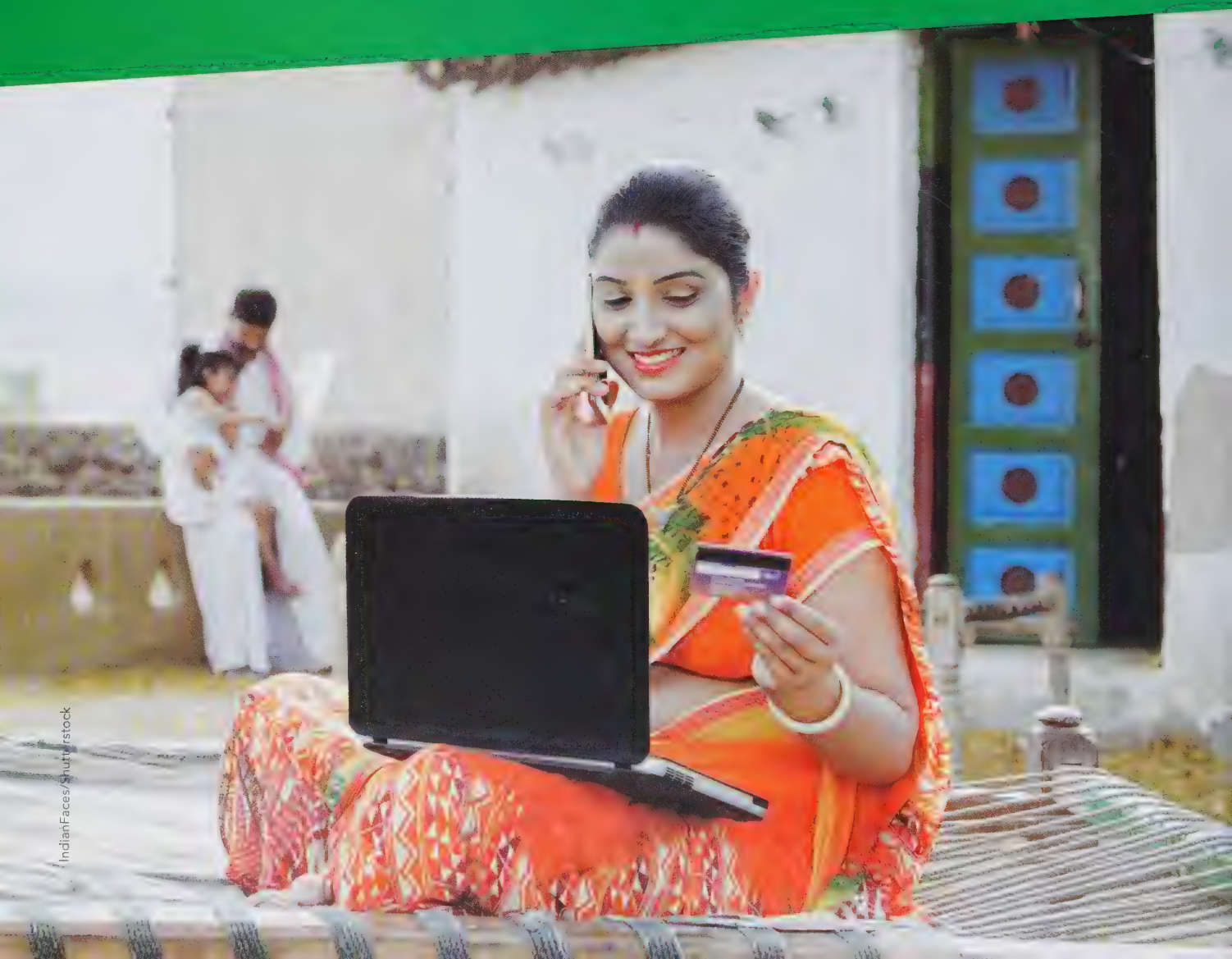
CHAPTER 5
Social Interaction

CHAPTER 6
Networks, Groups, Bureaucracies, and Societies

3 Culture

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Explain how culture makes life meaningful and helps solve human problems.
- Contrast biological and cultural explanations of human behaviour.
- Distinguish functionalist, symbolic interactionist, and conflict approaches to understanding culture.
- Detect ways in which culture increases human freedom by expanding the range of solutions to human problems.
- Identify how culture constrains human freedom by helping to shape the way society is organized.



IndianFaces/Shutterstock

Culture as Problem Solving

If you follow sports, you probably know that many athletes perform little rituals before each game. Edmonton Oilers superstar Connor McDavid is a prime example. On game day, his breakfast consists of six scrambled eggs, a large container of fresh strawberries, a whole-grain bagel, and orange juice. For his pre-game meal, he eats a grilled chicken breast with brown rice and quinoa. He rarely permits deviations from this regime, largely because he thinks it brings him good luck (Ireland, 2015).

THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jason Franson

Connor McDavid

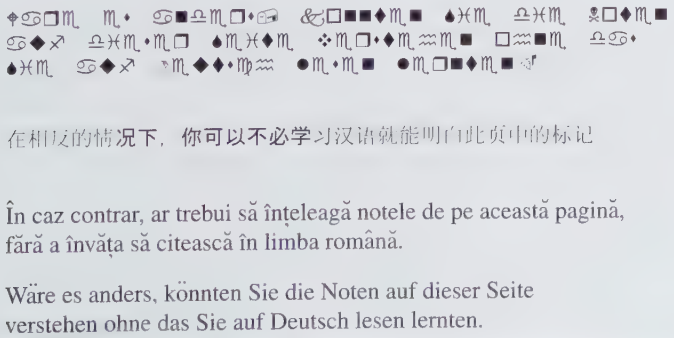
The superstitious practices of athletes make some people chuckle. However, such rituals put athletes at ease, and they are common. A study of 137 intercollegiate athletes at the University of Western Ontario found that they practised 6.6 superstitions each on average (Gregory and Petrie, 1975).

Many students have rituals that serve the same function when they are under exam stress. Some wear a lucky piece of jewellery or item of clothing. Others say special words or a quick prayer. Still others cross themselves. Then there are those who engage in more elaborate rituals. One study reports on a student who felt she would do well only if she ate a sausage and two eggs sunny-side up on the morning of each exam. She always placed the sausage vertically on the left side of her plate and the eggs to the right of the sausage—so they formed the "100" percent she was aiming for (Albas and Albas, 1989). The ritual likely had a more direct influence on her cholesterol level than on her grades. Yet it may have indirectly had the desired effect. To the degree the ritual helped relieve her anxiety and help her relax, she may have done better on her exams.

Superstitions translate particular experiences into meaningful observations that are useful insofar as they enable people to cope with specific life challenges. As you will now learn, superstitions share these features with all elements of culture.

Culture as Meaning Generator

Chapter 2 introduced a distinction between concrete and abstract levels of experience. The concrete level is composed of your empirical sensations of touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight. Viewing the squiggles in Figure 3.1 will give you several examples of concrete experience. Examine them carefully. What do the characters on each line mean to you?



在相反的情况下，你可以不必学习汉语就能明白此页中的标记

În caz contrar, ar trebui să înțeleagă notele de pe această pagină, fără a învăța să citească în limba română.

Wäre es anders, könnten Sie die Noten auf dieser Seite verstehen ohne das Sie auf Deutsch lesen lernten.

FIGURE 3.1
Four Texts

For most readers of this book, the characters will be meaningless. This is not because your eyesight is poor, but because concrete physical sensations, by themselves, are meaningless.

Now read the following sentence: *Were it otherwise, you would understand the marks on this page without learning to read English.* The characters in the preceding sentence are meaningful English words. Culture gives concrete experience meaning.

By the way, the first line in Figure 3.1 is gobbledygook. The remaining three lines are not. They are translations of the italicized sentence in the previous paragraph, expressed in Chinese, Romanian, and German. If you are appropriately connected to Chinese, Romanian, or German culture, the respective lines in Figure 3.1 would be just as meaningful to you as their English counterparts.

The power of culture is that it makes our sensory experiences meaningful. Once your cultural experience conditions you to interpret concrete experiences in a certain way, this perspective becomes your reality. As evidence, notice that you can't interpret the characters on this page as anything but English words. In a similar way, readers of Chinese cannot see the second line in Figure 3.1 as anything but Chinese, and readers of German cannot see the final line as anything but German.

Culture and Its Variants Defined

High culture is enjoyed mainly by upper classes.

Popular culture (or mass culture) is enjoyed by all classes.

Dominant culture helps rich and powerful categories of people exercise control over others.

Subordinate culture contests dominant culture to varying degrees.

In everyday speech, "culture" often refers to **high culture** (e.g., opera, ballet) or **popular culture** (e.g., movies, pop music). Popular or mass culture is consumed by many people in all social classes. In contrast, as French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) emphasized, the consumption of high culture tends to be restricted to upper classes. That is because appreciating the fine points of high culture requires a certain type of education or training that takes considerable time and money to achieve. This fact makes high culture more accessible to people in upper classes and less accessible to people in lower classes.

Sociologists who study the political effects of culture often distinguish **dominant culture** from **subordinate culture**. Dominant culture helps rich and powerful categories of people exercise control over others. Subordinate culture contests dominant culture to varying degrees.

Take the widely held notion that anyone can become rich if he or she works hard and makes smart choices. That belief is part of our dominant culture insofar as it is widely shared and justifies the wealth that rich people enjoy by making it seem as if rich people became wealthy just by virtue of their cleverness and diligence. It ignores the economic and other advantages that many rich people inherit from their parents. It also plays down the fact that many people who are not rich would like to make the right choices but lack the means to do so. Some people who want to attend medical school just can't afford it. The belief that hard work and smart choices alone determine success helps to justify the transmission of valued resources from rich and powerful adults to their children while obscuring the difficulties that others may face in their effort to move up the socioeconomic hierarchy.

To the degree that members of lower classes agree that hard work and good choices alone make people rich, they accept a core idea of dominant culture. However, many members of lower classes are skeptical about this belief because they work hard but experience social constraints that prevent them and their offspring from becoming rich: diseases and accidents related to the kinds of jobs they do, insufficient money to help their children attend college, university, and professional school, and so on. Such skepticism is part of their subordinate culture, and in certain circumstances it may boil over into outright rebellion against upper class ideas and institutions (see Chapter 18, Collective Action and Social Movements).

Even the idea that there is a "proper" way to speak English is part of the dominant culture. After all, well-to-do people are more likely to speak "proper" English than others are. And even if they don't, they can most easily afford to send their children to elite schools where they can learn the right accent, a rich vocabulary, and authoritative grammatical structures. Meeting "the right sort of people" depends in part on learning how to talk to them.

In this sense, proper English is a cultural tool that allows people to join useful social networks and exclude the less fortunate from them.

Leaving aside its variants, **culture** in general consists of the shared symbols and their definitions that people create to solve real-life problems. To understand this definition, we need to elaborate on its components. Let's start with the term *symbol*.

Culture consists of the shared symbols and their definitions that people create to solve real-life problems.

Symbols are concrete objects or abstract terms that represent something else. A gold ring on the third finger is an object that represents marital status. The term *Big Mac* is an abstract term that represents a particular type of hamburger supplied by a fast-food establishment. Symbols fill human experience.

Symbols are concrete objects or abstract terms that represent something else.

The meaning of a symbol does not reside in the symbol; the meaning resides in what the symbol refers to. For this reason, symbols always have an abstract dimension. This abstract feature of symbols is what is referred to by the words "and their definitions" in the key term definition of culture. A symbol's definition informs us of what the symbol represents.

Our definition of culture notes that symbols are *shared*. Idiosyncratic symbols are not part of culture. A psychotic person who believes that rain clouds represent happiness is using a symbol that is not part of culture. So, too, is use of the special terms and signs of endearment that lovers create for themselves. Culture is composed of symbols whose meanings are shared among a substantial number of people. The definition of a pencil as an instrument for writing is part of your culture. So is the idea that obtaining a college or university degree will improve your life. Members of a community who acquire a set of shared meaningful symbols participate in a common culture.

Culture is the primary driver of what people do because individuals respond to the meaning of events, and the meaning of events is defined by our culture. Culture intervenes between concrete experience and our responses by assigning significance. As a child, you looked at the night sky and saw only a pattern of twinkling lights. Over time, your culture provided you with such concepts as *star* and *Big Dipper*. Now, when you look up at night, you can distinguish stars, planets, comets, and constellations. The same holds true for all of your experiences. First you "look" (the concrete behaviour part), then you "name" (the cultural part), and then you "see" (the abstract understanding part).

The Origins of Culture

Culture is the primary means by which humans adapt to their environments; that is why our definition of culture emphasizes that we create culture to solve real-life problems. You can appreciate the importance of culture for human survival by considering the predicament of early humans about 100 000 years ago. They lived in harsh natural environments. They had poor physical endowments, being slower runners and weaker fighters than many other animals. Yet despite these disadvantages, they survived. More than that: They prospered and came to dominate nature. This was possible largely because they were the smartest creatures around. Their sophisticated brains enabled them to create cultural survival kits of enormous complexity and flexibility. These cultural survival kits contained three main tools. Each tool was a uniquely human talent. Each gave rise to a different element of culture.

The first tool in the cultural survival kit is **abstraction**, the ability to create general concepts that organize sensory experience in meaningful ways. You learned about this process in Chapter 2, which discussed the conceptualization process. The concepts that result from abstraction are the most pervasive type of symbols in human cultures. This is why language is so important to the preservation of any culture.

Abstraction is the ability to create general concepts that meaningfully organize sensory experience.

Concepts allow humans to organize, classify, interpret, and generalize their experiences. For instance, we recognize that we can sit on many objects but that only some of them have four legs, a back, and space for one person. We distinguish the latter from other objects by giving them a name: chairs. By the time a baby reaches the end of her first year, she has heard that word repeatedly and understands that it refers to a certain class of objects.

Cultural concepts provide the foundation for beliefs. **Beliefs** are statements about what members of a community define as real. Remember that culture is composed of a set of *shared* symbols. When beliefs are widely shared in a community, members accept such

Beliefs are cultural statements that define what community members consider real.

Cooperation is the capacity to create a complex social life by establishing generally accepted ways of doing things and ideas about what is right and wrong.

Norms are generally accepted ways of doing things.

Values are ideas about what is right and wrong, good and bad, desirable and undesirable, beautiful and ugly.

Production is the human capacity to make and use the tools and technology that improve our ability to take what we want from nature.

Material culture comprises the tools and techniques that enable people to accomplish tasks.

Non-material culture is composed of symbols, norms, and other intangible elements.

Social organization is the orderly arrangement of social interaction.

beliefs as truth. Cultural constructions of reality and truth do not necessarily coincide with scientifically established fact. Consider the following three statements: "The Sun orbits around Earth." "Opposites attract." "God is love." The first of these statements is demonstrably false, the second is only conditionally true (that is, true under some circumstances), while the third is scientifically untestable. Nonetheless, all these beliefs have been considered true in one culture or another, and community members have acted on the basis of such understandings.

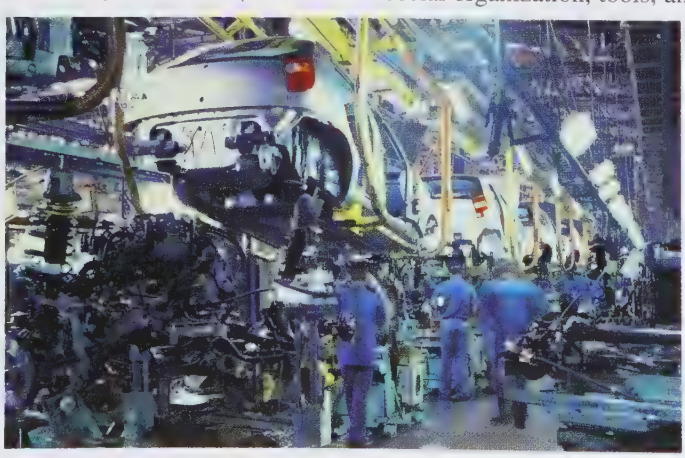
Cooperation is the second tool in the human cultural survival kit. It is the capacity to create a complex social life by establishing **norms** (generally accepted ways of doing things) and **values** (ideas about what is right and wrong, good and bad, desirable and undesirable, beautiful and ugly). For example, family members cooperate to raise children. In the process, they develop and apply norms and values about which child-rearing practices are appropriate and desirable. Different times and places give rise to different norms and values. In our society, non-Indigenous parents might ground children for swearing, but in pioneer days, non-Indigenous parents would typically "beat the devil out of them." In contrast, Indigenous parents rarely physically disciplined their children. They preferred teasing and public embarrassment as means of social control, and they tended to get uncles and aunts to enforce discipline so as not to alienate their children (Muir and Bohr, 2014). "Never in anger" was the first rule of child discipline among Inuit (Briggs, 1970). As these examples suggest, by analyzing how people cooperate and produce norms and values, we can learn much about what distinguishes one culture from another.

Production is the third main tool in the human cultural survival kit. Cultural production takes two main forms. First, it involves making and using tools and technology. Tools and technology improve our ability to take what we want from nature. We call such tools and techniques **material culture** because the tools and techniques are tangible, whereas symbols, norms, values, and other elements of **non-material culture** are intangible. All animals take from nature in order to subsist, and an ape may sometimes use a rock to break another object. But only humans are intelligent and dexterous enough to *make* tools and use them to produce everything from food to computers. Understood in this sense, production is a uniquely human activity.

Another result of cultural production is social organization. Culture is often characterized as a blueprint or design for living with others. **Social organization** is the orderly arrangement of social interaction. Within many species, ordered activities are a result of genetic programming. For example, ants are born to build colonies and bees are born to build hives. Not so with humans. Our organized social conduct is rooted in a *cultural* blueprint. Understanding, interpreting, and putting this blueprint into coordinated action is the key to community survival.

Table 3.1 lists each of the human capacities we have discussed and illustrates their cultural offshoots in the field of medicine. As in medicine, so in all fields of human activity—abstraction, cooperation, and production give rise to specific kinds of beliefs, norms, values, social organization, tools, and technologies that help us deal with real-life problems.

By cooperating, people are able to accomplish more than the same number of people working individually could accomplish.



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Four Types of Norms: Folkways, Mores, Taboos, and Laws

If a man walks down a busy street wearing nothing on the top half of his body, he is violating a folkway. If he walks down the street wearing nothing on the bottom half of his body, he is violating a more (the Latin word for "custom," pronounced MOR-ay). **Folkways** are norms that specify social *preferences*. **Mores** are norms that specify social *requirements*. People are usually punished when they violate norms, but the punishment is usually minor when the norm is a folkway. Some onlookers will raise their eyebrows at the shirtless man.

The human capacity for...	Abstraction	Cooperation	Production
Gives rise to these elements of culture	**Beliefs**	**Norms and values**	**Material culture and social organization**
In medicine, for example...	*Theories* are developed about how a certain drug might cure a disease.	*Experiments* are conducted to test whether the drug works as expected.	*Treatments* are developed on the basis of the experimental results.

TABLE 3.1
The Building Blocks of Culture

Source: Adapted from Robert Bierstedt, 1963, The Social Order. New York: McGraw-Hill

Others will shake their head in disapproval. In contrast, the punishment for walking down the street without pants will probably be moderately harsh. Someone is bound to call the police, probably sooner than later (Sumner, 1940 [1907]). The strongest and most central norms, however, are **taboos**. When someone violates a taboo, it causes revulsion in the community, and punishment is severe. Incest is one of the most widespread taboos.

Folkways, mores, and taboos form a continuum that displays a community's understanding of the importance of each type of norm for community life. Because of the importance of mores and taboos, these norms are often transformed into laws. **Laws** are norms that have codified and enforced punishments by the state. Robbery, for example, is against the law. According to the law, it is unacceptable to take someone's property by using violence or the threat of violence. Further, the law specifies the forms of punishment (fines, imprisonment, etc.) to be experienced by people convicted of robbery.

Folkways are norms that specify social preferences. Because they are the least important norms, violating them evokes the least severe punishment.

Mores (pronounced MOR-ays) are core norms that most people believe are essential for the survival of their group or their society.

Taboos are the strongest norms. When someone violates a taboo, it causes revulsion in the community and punishment is severe.

Laws are norms that are codified and enforced by the state.

Time for Review

- What are the similarities and differences among high culture, popular culture, and the sociological definition of culture?
- Is the concept "banana" a symbol? Why, or why not?
- How is it possible for cultural beliefs to be scientifically false?
- What are similarities and differences among folkways, mores, and taboos?

Culture and Biology

The Evolution of Human Behaviour

We have seen how the human capacity for abstraction, cooperation, and production enables us to create culture and makes us distinctively human. This capacity is built on a solid biological foundation. Biology, as every sociologist recognizes, sets broad human limits and potentials, including the potential to create culture.

Some biologically trained students of human behaviour go a step further. For example, evolutionary psychologists claim that genes—chemical units that carry traits from parents to children—account not just for physical characteristics but also for specific behaviours and social practices (Buss, 2014; Workman and Reader, 2014). They deny the significance of culture. Such thinking is growing in popularity, and it undermines the sociological perspective. As the following example illustrates, it is also misguided.

MALE PROMISCUITY, FEMALE FIDELITY, AND OTHER MYTHS

Evolutionary psychologists employ a three-step argument for their biological explanation of human behaviour and social arrangements. First, they identify a supposedly universal human

behavioural trait. Next, they offer an explanation for why this behaviour increases survival chances through reproduction. Finally, they conclude that the behaviour in question cannot easily be changed. For example, they explain alleged male promiscuity and female fidelity as follows:

1. *Universal claim:* Men are more likely than women are to want many sexual partners.
2. *Survival-value argument:* Every time a man ejaculates, he produces hundreds of millions of sperm, while fertile women typically release only one egg per month. Based on these sex differences, men and women develop different strategies to increase the chances of reproducing their genes. Because a woman produces few eggs, she improves her chance of reproducing her genes if she has a mate who stays around to help and protect her while she is pregnant, giving birth, and nursing a small infant. By contrast, because a man's sperm is plentiful, he improves his chance of reproducing his genes if he tries to impregnate as many women as possible.
3. *Conclusion:* These biologically based reproductive strategies are encoded or "hard-wired" in our genes. Therefore, male promiscuity and female fidelity are necessary.

Let's examine this argument, using skills you learned in Chapter 2.

Table 3.2 contains data from a survey of a representative sample of the US population. It shows that a minority of adult US men (21 percent) claimed having more than one sex partner in the previous year. The figure for adult US women was significantly lower (10 percent). However, if we control for marital status, as in Table 3.3, the figures fall to 5 percent for men and 1 percent for women, a much smaller difference. In other words, the association between gender and promiscuity is largely spurious; a *social* arrangement, the institution of marriage, accounts in substantial measure for variation in male promiscuity. There is no universal propensity to male promiscuity.

Still, the data in Table 3.2 indicate that 11 percent more men than women said they had more than one sex partner in the preceding year. Among unmarried people, the male-female difference was 14 percent. Sociologists attribute these gender differences to two main factors (McConaghy, 1999: 311–14). First, on average, gay men are more likely than lesbians are to have many sex partners. This finding contradicts the evolutionary psychologists' argument that male promiscuity reflects an adaptive reproductive strategy because, clearly, gay men do not have sex with other men to make babies. Moreover, in-depth interviews suggest that men tend to exaggerate how many sexual partners they have because our *culture* puts a premium on male sexual performance. Genes and reproductive strategies play no role in this regard.

TABLE 3.2

Number of Sex Partners by Respondent's Sex, United States (percentage)

Source: From National Opinion Research Center, 2004, General Social Survey, 1972–2002 (Chicago: University of Chicago), machine-readable file. Reprinted with permission.

	Respondent's Sex	
Number of Sex Partners	**Male**	**Female**
0 or 1	79	90
More than 1	21	10
Total	100	100
n (number of respondents)	1004	1233

TABLE 3.3

Number of Sex Partners by Respondent's Sex, United States, Married Respondents Only (percentage)

Source: From National Opinion Research Center, 2004, General Social Survey, 1972–2002 (Chicago: University of Chicago), machine-readable file. Reprinted with permission.

	Respondent's Sex	
Number of Sex Partners	**Male**	**Female**
0 or 1	95	99
More than 1	5	1
Total	100	100
n (number of respondents)	499	534

We conclude that the evolutionary psychologists' claims about male promiscuity and female fidelity are false. So are many of their other claims about so-called behavioural universals.

An additional problem with the evolutionary psychologists' argument is that little evidence links specific behaviours and social arrangements to specific genes. Finally, even if researchers discover an association between particular genes and particular behaviours, it would be wrong to conclude that variations among people are due only to their genes. Genes *never* develop without environmental influence.

In sum, genes do not hardwire behaviour patterns. Changes in social environment produce physical and, to an even greater degree, behavioural change. To determine the effects of the social environment on human behaviour, we need to remain skeptical about the premises of evolutionary psychology and use sociological skills to analyze the effects of social structure and culture.

Language and the Sapir-Whorf Thesis

Language is one of the most important parts of any culture. A language is a system of symbols used to communicate ideas. Language allows us to share understandings, transmit experience and knowledge from one generation to the next, and plan for the future. Sociologists commonly regard language as a cultural invention that distinguishes humans from other animals.

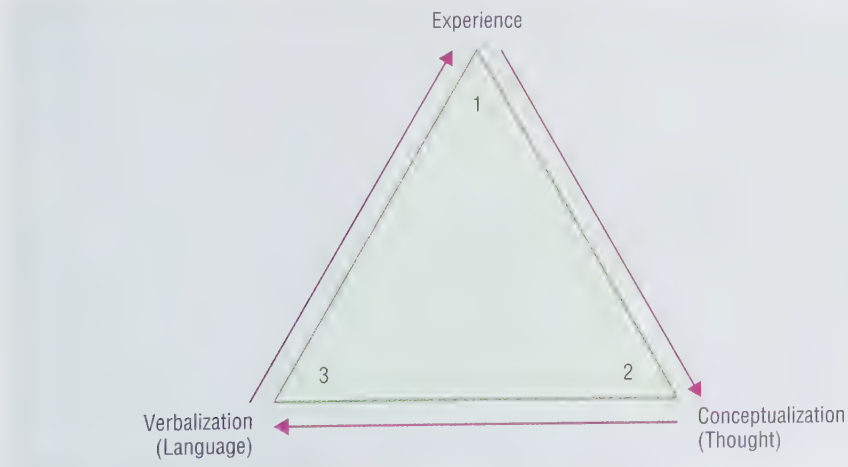
The connection between experience, thought, and language was explored by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf in the 1930s. Their influential argument is known today as the **Sapir-Whorf thesis** (O'Neill, 2015; Skerrett, 2010; Whorf, 1956). According to this thesis, we experience important things in our environment and create concepts about those things (path 1 to 2 in Figure 3.2). We then develop language to refer to these concepts (path 2 to 3). Finally, language itself influences how we see the world (path 3 to 1).

The **Sapir-Whorf thesis** holds that we experience certain things in our environment and form concepts about those things. We then develop language to express our concepts. Finally, language itself influences how we see the world.

For example, different types of camels are important in the environment of nomadic Arabs, and different types of snow are important in the lives of Inuit in Canada's Far North and Alaska, and the Sami people in northern Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden (path 1 to 2). Consequently, nomadic Arabs have developed many words for different types of camels and the Inuit and the Sami have developed many terms for different types of snow (path 2 to 3). Distinctions that these people see may elude us because types of camels and snow are less important in our environment (Krupnik and Müller-Wille, 2010; Neil, 2014). On the other hand, terms that are familiar to every Canadian hockey fan—poke-check, slot, five-hole, tic-tac-toe—are unlikely to have equivalents in, say, Japanese.

In turn, language obliges people to think in certain ways (path 3 to 1; see Box 3.1). For instance, income and power inequality between women and men encourages some men to use terms like *fox*, *babe*, *bitch*, *ho*, and *doll* to refer to women. The use of such words in

FIGURE 3.2
The Sapir-Whorf Thesis



Source: Robert Brym

BOX 3.1 Social Policy

DECLINING INDIGENOUS AND OTHER LANGUAGES

Someone once defined language as a dialect supported by an army and a navy (Weinreich, 1945: 13). The definition makes a lot of sense if we consider changes in language use worldwide. For centuries, Great Britain, the United States, France, Portugal, and Spain gained economic, political, and cultural influence over much of the world by employing military violence, supporting sympathetic local governments, helping to create new educational systems, fostering the spread of the mass media, and encouraging the use of their national languages. The rise of English (and, to a lesser degree, French, Portuguese, and Spanish) has consequently meant the elimination or endangerment of thousands of languages around the world spoken by the tribes of Papua New Guinea; the native peoples of the Americas; the national and tribal minorities of Asia, Africa, and Oceania; and marginalized European peoples, such as the Irish and the Basques. More than half the people in the world speak just 23 languages. There are 7099 living languages in the world, but 34.8 percent of them are endangered, with the rate of extinction now being about 600 languages per century (Simons and Fennig, 2017). *All* of Canada's Indigenous languages fall into the "endangered" category.

Canada's more than 70 Indigenous languages are endangered because the Canadian government decided to eliminate them as a matter of social policy. To make way for European colonists' farms, industries, railroads, and towns, the government segregated most Indigenous people on "reserves," often by force. However, Sir John A. Macdonald, our first Prime Minister, saw the reserve system as a problem when it came to educating children. As he wrote in 1879:

> *When . . . the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and . . . mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly impressed upon myself . . . that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men. (quoted in Joseph, 2016)*

Here we have the core idea for what became Canada's residential school system, a network of government-funded, church-run schools that over the course of their existence housed and trained some 150,000 Indigenous children. The residential schools aimed to help the children "escape" their cultures, facilitating their assimilation into White, European-Canadian culture. After being removed from their families, they were placed in an alien environment where malnourishment and abuse—emotional, physical, and sexual—were widespread. Some 4 percent of the children died while in the "care" of residential school staff members. Any hint of Indigenous culture was strictly forbidden. Use of Indigenous languages was punished (Brym, 2018: 125–46).

The effect on Indigenous language use was telling. As late as the 1951 census, fully 87.4 percent of Indigenous Canadians said they could speak an Indigenous language. By 1996, the figure had plummeted to 29.3 percent. In that year, the last residential school was shut down, but by then the capacity to sustain Indigenous languages had been so massively eroded that the figure continued to fall. In 2016, just 15.5 percent of Canada's 1.67 million Indigenous people claimed they could carry on a conversation in an Indigenous language.

TABLE 3.4

Speakers of Indigenous Languages in Canada, 2016

Language Group	Speakers	Geographical Concentration of Speakers
Algonquian (Cree, etc.)	175 825	Manitoba, Québec, Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan
Inuit (Inuktitut, etc.)	42 065	Nunavut, Québec
Athabaskan (Dene, etc.)	23 455	Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, British Columbia
Salish (Shuswap, etc.)	5 620	British Columbia
Siouan (Stoney, etc.)	5 400	Alberta, Manitoba
Iroquoian (Mohawk, etc.)	2 715	Ontario, Québec
Other	6 180	British Columbia
Total	260 550	

Source: Statistics Canada, "The Aboriginal languages of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit," (2017) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016022/98-200-x2016022-eng.cfm

Today, most of Canada's Indigenous languages are spoken by fewer than 1000 people (Burnaby and Beaujot, 1987: 36; Statistics Canada, 2017f; Table 3.4). True, some young people are now learning an Indigenous language as a second language, but it is questionable whether this movement can stem the decline.

Much of the culture of a people—its prayers, humour, conversational styles, technical vocabulary, myths, and way of thinking—is expressed through language. Therefore, the loss of language amounts to the disappearance of tradition and in some cases even identity, and their replacement by the traditions and identity of a colonial power. These days, television, movies, and the Web play a leading role in speeding the loss (Woodbury, 2003).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Can the Canadian government do more to support the revival of Canada's Indigenous languages?
2. If so, what should it do? If not, why not?

itself influences men to think of women simply as sexual objects. Feminist theorists argue that thinking about women in this way sustains a **rape culture** on college and university campuses and in society as a whole. In a rape culture, sexual harassment, slut-shaming, the trivialization of rape, victim-blaming, and sexual assault are widespread. For some people, these actions seem normal. As some members of the Me Too Movement emphasize, if men are ever going to think of women as equals, actual gender inequality will have to be reduced—but the language such men use to refer to women will also have to change.

A **rape culture** is a culture in which sexual harassment, slut-shaming, the trivialization of rape, victim-blaming, and sexual assault are widespread and, for large sections of the population, these actions seem normal.

A Functionalist Analysis of Culture: Culture and Ethnocentrism

Despite culture's central importance in human life, it is often invisible to people who are immersed in it. People tend to take their own culture for granted; it usually seems so sensible and natural that they rarely think about it. In contrast, people are often startled when confronted by cultures other than their own. The ideas, norms, and techniques of other cultures frequently seem odd, irrational, and even inferior.

Judging another culture exclusively by the standards of our own is called **ethnocentrism**. Ethnocentrism impairs the sociological understanding of culture as much as taking our own culture for granted does. The negative effect of ethnocentrism on sociological understanding may be illustrated by a practice that seems bizarre to many Westerners: cow worship among many Hindus in India.

Ethnocentrism is the tendency for people to judge other cultures exclusively by the standards of their own culture.

Many Hindus refuse to slaughter cattle and eat beef because, for them, the cow is a religious symbol of life. Pinup calendars throughout India portray beautiful women with the bodies of fat white cows, milk jetting out of each teat. Cows are permitted to wander the streets, defecate on the sidewalks, and stop to chew their cud in busy intersections and on railroad tracks, causing traffic to come to a halt. In Madras, police stations maintain fields

Angelo Giampiccolo/Shutterstock

Although Westerners may find it strange that some Indians worship cows, this practice performs a number of useful economic functions and is in that sense rational. Viewing cow worship only from the position of an outsider (or, for that matter, only from an insider's position), we are unable to see its rational core.

where stray cows that have fallen ill can graze and be nursed back to health. The government even runs old-age homes for cows where dry and decrepit cattle are kept free of charge. All of this seems inscrutable to most Westerners, for it takes place amid poverty and hunger that could presumably be alleviated if only the people would slaughter their "useless" cattle for food instead of squandering scarce resources to feed and protect them.

The trouble is, ethnocentrism misleads many Western observers (Harris, 1974: 3–32). Cow worship, it turns out, is an economically rational practice, especially in rural areas. For one thing, Indian peasants cannot afford tractors, so cows are needed to give birth to oxen, which are in high demand for plowing. For another, the cows produce hundreds of millions of kilograms of recoverable manure, about half of which is used as fertilizer and half as cooking fuel. With oil, coal, and wood in short supply, and with many peasants unable to afford chemical fertilizers, cow dung is, well, a godsend. What is more, cows in India don't cost much to maintain since they eat mostly food that is not fit for human consumption. And they represent an important source of protein and a livelihood for members of low-ranking castes, who have the right to dispose of the bodies of dead cattle. (A **caste** is a hereditary class authorized by religion.) These "untouchables" eat beef and form the workforce of India's large leather-craft industry. The protection of cows by means of cow worship is thus a sensible and efficient economic practice. It seems irrational only when judged by the standards of Western agribusiness.

A **caste** is a hereditary class authorized by religion.

Harris's analysis of cow worship in rural India shows how functionalist theory can provide insight into otherwise puzzling social practices. Specifically, Harris argues that cow worship fulfills a range of hidden functions, showing that a particular social practice can have unintended and non-obvious consequences that contribute to social order. In addition, Harris's analysis helps us draw an important conclusion about ethnocentrism: If you refrain from taking your own culture for granted and judging other cultures by the standards of your own, you will have taken the first steps toward developing a sociological understanding of culture.

Time for Review

- What is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? Provide an example of how it operates from your personal experience.
- The works of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and their peers are typically labelled "classical" music. How might such labelling be interpreted as ethnocentrism?

Culture as Freedom and Constraint

Some sociologists emphasize the way in which culture acts as an independent variable *causing* the establishment of certain patterns of social relations. Other sociologists emphasize the way in which culture acts as a dependent variable. From the latter viewpoint, culture is an *effect* of certain patterns of social relations.

Harris's analysis of cow worship in India illustrates the second case. In Harris's view, social relations in India—in particular, social relations that result in a relatively low level of economic development—are such that the protection of cows becomes an economic necessity. The social necessity presumably gives rise to an aspect of Hinduism: the belief among individuals that cows are holy. Some conflict theorists take a similar view about the relationship between social relations and cultural consequences.

Symbolic interactionists take the opposing view. For them, people are not empty vessels into which society pours a defined assortment of beliefs, symbols, and values. Rather, elements of culture result from human creativity and choice; we are at liberty to give meaning to the people and things in our environment. Culture is the outcome of our choices, and culture shapes and constrains our social relations. Some poststructuralists hold a similar view about the relationship between human creativity as the source of culture and of structured social relations.

In the remainder of this chapter we probe these two faces of culture—culture as freedom and culture as constraint.

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Canada continues to diversify culturally.

Culture as Freedom

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

One reason why we are increasingly able to choose how culture influences us is that Canadian society has diversified. Like many societies in the world, Canada is undergoing rapid cultural diversification because of a rising number of immigrants and the wide range in their countries of origin (Roberts et al., 2013). In fact, Canada is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world (see Figure 3.3).

In 2019, Canada admitted about 341 000 immigrants, a record number. Immigration slowed in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is widely expected to pick up and exceed the 2019 level not long after 2020 (Singer, 2020). A high rate of immigration

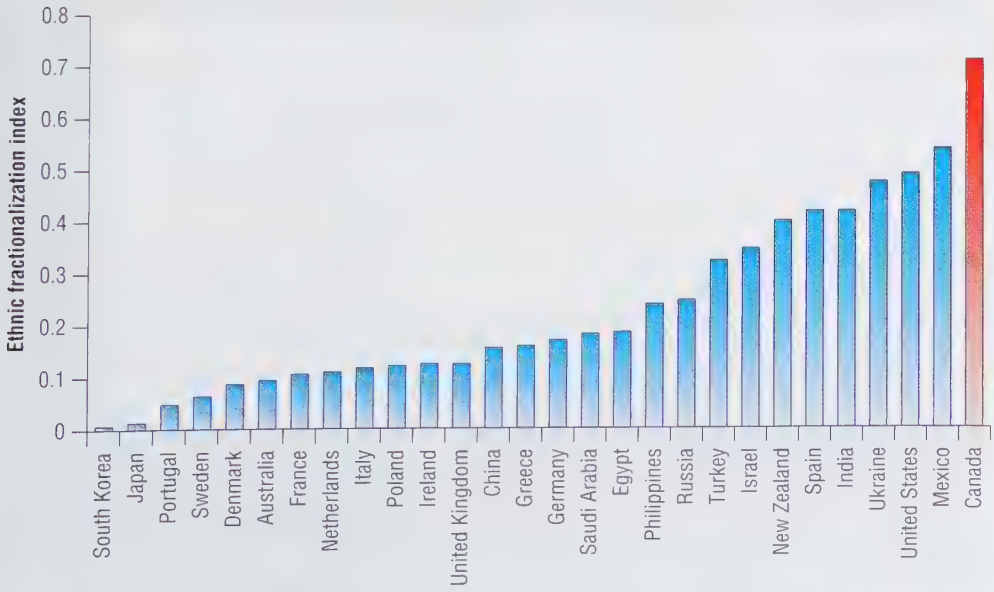


FIGURE 3.3

Ethnic Diversity in 28 Countries

Note: The index of ethnic "fractionalization" ranges from 0 to 1, with a high score indicating high diversity.

Source: Created from data in Alesina et al. (2003)

ensures that we are exposed to a sumptuous buffet of cultural options in everything from the food we eat to the people we date, court, and marry.

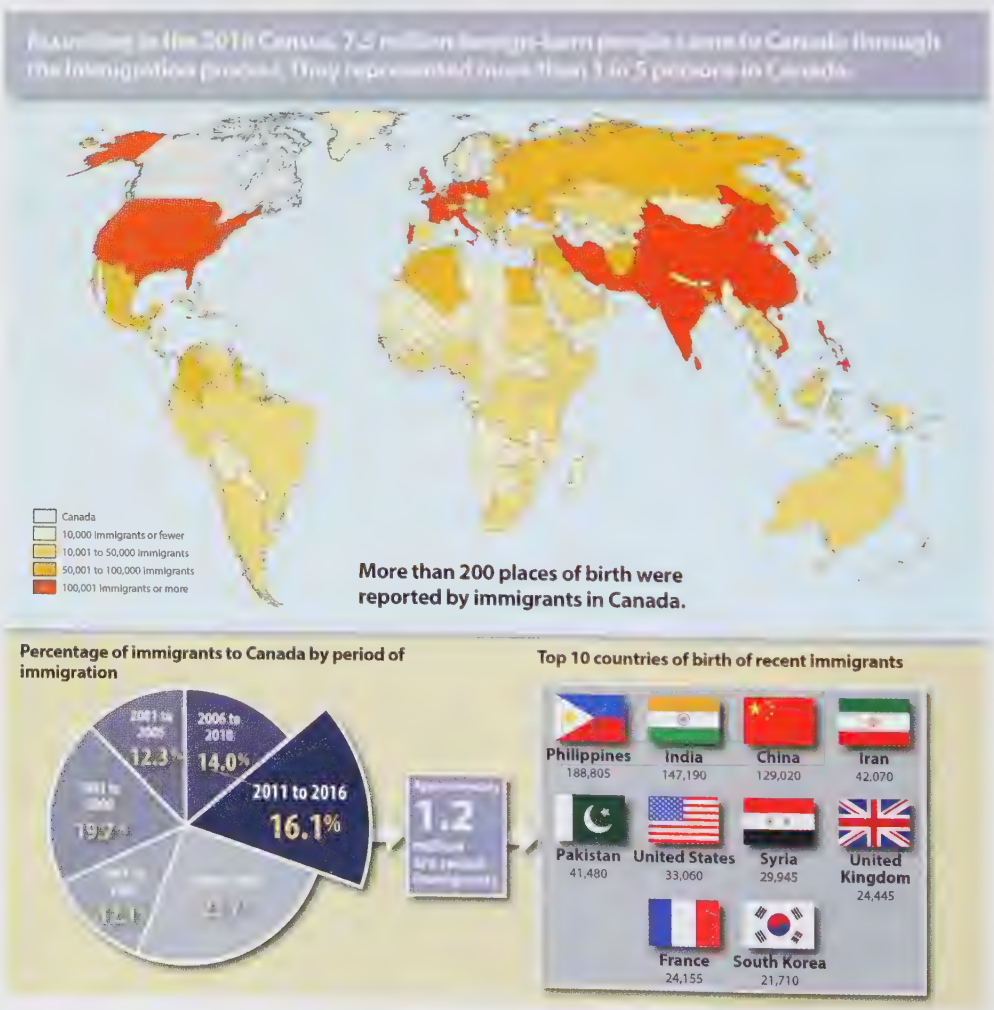
Canada used to be composed almost exclusively of Christians from northern Europe and an Indigenous minority. Then, in the 1960s, Canada eliminated overt racism in its immigration policies, and the country began to diversify culturally. About 95 percent of immigrants who arrived in Canada before 1961 came from Europe and the United States. Between 2011 and 2016, about 87 percent of immigrants came from places *outside* Europe and the United States. Because of the inflow of immigrants from such places as the Philippines, India, China, and Pakistan, more than 22 percent of the population are now members of "visible minority" groups. About three-quarters of visible minority Canadians reside in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, with most of the rest residing in Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg (see Figure 3.4; Statistics Canada, 2017d).

Multiculturism is a federal government policy that promotes and funds the maintenance of culturally diverse communities, thus strengthening the trend toward cultural diversification.

MULTICULTURALISM

In the early 1970s, the Canadian government adopted a policy of **multiculturalism**, making Canada the world's first officially multicultural society. Multicultural policy promotes and funds the maintenance of culturally diverse communities, thus strengthening the trend toward cultural diversification (Fleras and Elliott, 2002). The multiculturalist principle is enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which forms the first part of the 1982 Constitution Act. With the passage of the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act,

FIGURE 3.4
Immigrant Population in Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, "Immigrant population in Canada" (2018). Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/index-eng.htm

the government confirmed its commitment to recognizing all Canadians as "full and equal participants in Canadian society."

Although each provincial and territorial government in Canada has jurisdiction over education, until recent decades, schools across Canada stressed the common elements of our culture, history, and society. Students learned the historical importance of the "charter groups"—the English and the French. School curricula typically neglected the contributions to Canada's development by non-Whites, non-French, and non-English. Moreover, students learned little about the less savoury aspects of Canadian history, including immigration policies that sought to preserve Canada's "English stock" by restricting or denying entry to certain groups (see Chapter 10, Race and Ethnicity). In general, history books were written from the perspective of the victors, not the vanquished.

Since the 1970s, multiculturalists have argued that school, college, and university curricula should present a more balanced view of Canadian history, society, and culture. Curricula that reflect the country's ethnic and racial diversity will presumably allow minority groups to gain respect, dignity, and power and, in doing so, bring the educational system into line with Canada's status as the first officially multicultural society (Joshee and Sinfield, 2012). In 1971, the Canadian government declared that Canada, while officially bilingual, had no "official" culture—that is, none of the distinguishable cultures in Canada takes precedence over the others. With the passage of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, the federal government confirmed its commitment to the recognition of all Canadians as full and equal participants in Canadian society ("Canada," 2018). Multiculturalists conclude that to the extent that existing curricula are biased, they fail to provide students with the type of education demanded by a country truly devoted to multiculturalism.

Critics of multiculturalism maintain that our multiculturalist policies weaken Canada's social fabric. For one thing, they argue that multiculturalism encourages **cultural relativism**, which is the opposite of ethnocentrism. It is the idea that all cultures and cultural practices have equal value. The trouble with this view is that some cultures oppose values that most Canadians hold dear. Should we respect racist and antidemocratic cultures, such as the apartheid regime that existed in South Africa from 1948 until 1992? Or female circumcision, which is still widely practised in Somalia, Sudan, and Egypt? Critics argue that by promoting cultural relativism, multiculturalism encourages respect for practices that are abhorrent to most Canadians. (Multiculturalists reply that cultural relativism need not be taken to an extreme. *Moderate* cultural relativism encourages tolerance and should be promoted.)

Cultural relativism is the belief that all cultures have equal value.

MULTICULTURALISM IN QUÉBEC

Québec has enjoyed unique linguistic and constitutional rights since Confederation, and those rights have expanded considerably since 1867. Today, Québec uses public policy to reinforce its distinctiveness as a French society.

A recent example is Bill 21, passed in 2019. It bans the display of religious symbols worn by educators, police officers, and legal personnel employed by the province. These symbols include the *hijab* (headdress) worn by some Muslim women, the *kipa* (skullcap) worn by some Jewish men, the *dastaar* (turban) worn by some Sikh men, and crosses worn as necklaces by some Christians of all genders. The stated purpose of the law is to maintain the cultural distinctiveness of Québec by reinforcing the secular character of public institutions and services. However, because crosses can be worn under one's shirt or dress, while headwear is necessarily on public display, the legislation is especially discriminatory against non-Christian minorities. In short, Bill 21 flies in the face of multiculturalism.

The most recent survey on the subject as of this writing shows that 64 percent of Quebecers support Bill 21, although the (unreported) figure for Quebecers of French origin is undoubtedly considerably higher since 23 percent of Québec's residents are not of French origin. Support for Bill 21 in the rest of Canada is much lower, especially in Atlantic Canada, where it is only 24 percent (Forum Research, 2019). This means that the balance between cultural constraints and freedom of cultural expression is leaning toward the former in Québec and toward the latter in the rest of the country. Clearly, multiculturalism is a complex and emotional issue that will continue to stimulate political debate and conflict in Canada.

A CONFLICT ANALYSIS OF CULTURE: THE RIGHTS REVOLUTION

Conflict theory offers one way of understanding the social roots of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. As discussed in Chapter 1, the main argument of conflict theory is that social life is an ongoing struggle between more and less advantaged groups. Specifically, privileged groups try to preserve their advantages while subordinate groups try to increase theirs. This insight encourages us to see the debate over cultural diversity and multiculturalism as a **rights revolution**, in which socially excluded groups struggle against advantaged groups to win equal rights under the law and in practice.

The rights revolution is the process by which socially excluded groups struggled to win equal rights under the law and in practice beginning in the second half of the twentieth century.

After the sickening display of nationalism, racism, and genocidal behaviour during World War II, the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The declaration acknowledged the "inherent dignity" and "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" and stated that "every organ of society" should "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance" (United Nations, 1998a). Because of these sentiments, the rights revolution began in earnest in the 1960s.

Today, our world encompasses a range of rights, including women's rights, minority rights, LGBTQ+ rights, the rights of people with special needs, constitutional rights, and language rights. Although far from over—many groups of people continue to be discriminated against socially, politically, and economically—the rights revolution has led to a widening and deepening of democracy (Chapter 13, Political Economy). In many parts of the world today, all categories of people participate more fully than ever before in the life of their societies (United Nations Development Programme, 2016).

The rights revolution raises some difficult issues, however. For instance, Indigenous peoples, among others, have demanded compensation and restitution in the form of money, symbolic gestures, land, and political autonomy (Chapter 10, Race and Ethnicity). The extent to which current citizens should be responsible for compensating for past injustices is a source of controversy.

Nevertheless, the rights revolution is here to stay and it continues to affect our culture profoundly. Specifically, by legitimizing the grievances of groups that have been historically excluded from full social participation, the rights revolution fragments Canadian culture. Our history books, literature, music, use of languages, and very sense of what it means to be Canadian have become more culturally diverse. Although White, male, heterosexual property owners of north European origin still hold a disproportionate amount of power and influence in Canada, our culture is no longer dominated by them in the way that it was just 50 or 60 years ago.

FROM DIVERSITY TO GLOBALIZATION

Little cultural diversification is evident in preliterate or tribal societies. In these types of societies, all group members have the same cultural beliefs and follow the same practices. Thus, many tribal societies organize **rites of passage**—ceremonies marking the transition from one stage of life to another (for example, from childhood to adulthood). These ceremonies may consist of body painting, chants, and dancing. They typically occur in public, and participants are not allowed to change the rules that define them. In preliterate societies, culture is homogeneous (Durkheim, 1976 [1915]).

Rites of passage are cultural ceremonies that mark the transition from one stage of life to another.

In contrast, artistic, religious, scientific, and political revolutions rendered the cultures of preindustrial Western Europe and North America heterogeneous. Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the French and American Revolutions encouraged people to question nearly every aspect of life. The scientific method required the exercise of skepticism about established opinion on a wide range of issues; political revolutions demonstrated that royalty did not rule by the will of God; and the Protestant rebellion divided opinion on the role of the Catholic Church as the supreme interpreter of God's will.

The rate of cultural fragmentation increased during industrialization, as a wide range of occupational roles became available and new political and intellectual movements formed. It is picking up steam again today in the postindustrial era because of the effects of globalization. Globalization is the process by which formerly separate economies, states, and cultures are tied together and people become aware of their growing interdependence.

Sean Pavone/Shutterstock

The idea of globalization first gained prominence in marketing strategies in the 1970s. In the 1980s, such companies as Coca-Cola and McDonald's expanded into non-Western countries to find new markets.

The international influences characterizing globalization take many forms and are evident in politics, religion, the mass media, and styles of clothing and music. One of the most important roots of globalization is the expansion of international trade and investment. Even the most patriotic of Canadians has probably dined at least once at McDonald's—and even a business as "American" as McDonald's generates two-thirds of its revenue in 117 countries outside of the United States (Shaw, 2016). At the same time, members of different ethnic and racial groups are migrating and coming into sustained contact with one another. Influential transnational organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, Greenpeace, and Amnesty International, are multiplying. Relatively inexpensive international travel and communication make contacts among people from diverse cultures routine.

Globalization has its detractors and opponents, as you will learn in Chapter 13, Political Economy, and Chapter 18, Collective Action and Social Movements. However, it is undeniable that its influence is pervasive. The mass media ensures that Disney's *Frozen* series is nearly as well known in Warsaw as in Winnipeg. MTV brings Lil Nas X to the world via stations in Canada, Brazil, Japan, India, China, Australia, Korea, Russia, and so on. Globalization, in short, helps to break down political, economic, and cultural isolation, bringing people together in what Canadian media analyst Marshall McLuhan (1964) called a "global village." Because of globalization, people are at liberty to combine elements of culture from a wide range of historical periods and geographical settings rather than accepting the culture they were born into. Globalization looks like a Gujarati-speaking schoolboy in Delhi listening to K-pop on his Huawei smartphone as he puts on his Converse Chuck Taylors, quickly downs a bowl of Kellogg's Basmati Flakes, and says "Ciao" to his parents while rushing off to his English-language school.

POSTMODERNISM

Some sociologists think that so much cultural fragmentation and reconfiguration has taken place in the last few decades that a new term is needed to characterize the culture of our times: **postmodernism**. Scholars often describe the period between 1850 and 1950 as the era of modernity. During that hundred-year period, Western culture exhibited three main features: belief in the inevitability of progress, respect for authority, and consensus around core values. In contrast, postmodern culture involves an eclectic mixing of elements from different times and places, the erosion of authority, and the decline of consensus around core values. Let us consider each of these aspects of postmodernism in turn.

Postmodernism is characterized by an eclectic mix of cultural elements, the erosion of authority, and the decline of consensus around core values.

Issandra Melo/Shutterstock

A hallmark of postmodernism is the combining of cultural elements from different times and places. For example, the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal that was added to the Royal Ontario Museum created a postmodern nightmare in the eyes of some critics.

An Eclectic Mixing of Elements from Different Times and Places

In the postmodern era, it is relatively easy to create personalized belief systems and practices by blending facets of different cultures and historical periods. Canadians are increasingly willing to feast from a religious buffet that combines a conventional menu with a wide assortment of less conventional beliefs and practices, including astrology, tarot, New Age mysticism, psychic phenomena, and communication with the dead (Bibby, 2011, 2013). Many people now draw on religions in much the same way consumers shop in a mall. Meanwhile, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, and other religious institutions have diversified their services to appeal to the spiritual, leisure, and social needs of religious consumers and retain their loyalties in the competitive market for congregants and parishioners (Finke and Stark, 2005).

The mix-and-match approach we see when it comes to religion is evident in virtually all spheres of culture. Although purists may scoff at such cultural blending, it has an important social consequence. People who engage in cultural blending are likely to be more tolerant and appreciative of ethnic, racial, and religious groups other than their own.

The Erosion of Authority

According to Canadian censuses, the proportion of Canadians with "no religious affiliation" nearly doubled from 12.6 percent in 1991 to 23.9 percent in 2011. During the same period, those identifying themselves as Christian declined from 83.0 to 67.3 percent of the population (Statistics Canada, 2013a). In 2016, 80 percent of Canadians born before 1946 believed that God or a higher power exists, but the comparable figure for Canadians born after 1985 was 66 percent (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey, 2019: 176). These figures reflect a widespread trend: Half a century ago, Canadians were more likely than they are today to defer to authority in religion, the family, schools, politics, medicine, and so on. However, as the social bases of authority have multiplied, we are more likely to challenge authority. Authorities once widely respected, including members of the clergy, parents, physicians, and politicians, have come to be held in lower regard by many people. In the 1950s, Robert Young played a firm, wise, and always-present father in the popular TV series *Father Knows Best.* Today, Homer on *The Simpsons* and Phil Dunphy of *Modern Family* are typical TV fathers: idiots. The rise of Homer Simpson and the decline of confidence in a higher power reflect the erosion of traditional authority (Nevitte, 2011; Roberts et al., 2005).

The Decline of Consensus around Core Values

Half a century ago, people's values remained relatively stable during their adult lives, and many values were widely accepted. Today, value shifts are more rapid, and consensus has broken down on many issues (Nevitte, 2011; Roberts et al., 2005). For example, in the middle of the twentieth century, the great majority of adults remained loyal to one political party from one election to the next. Today, specific issues and personalities have increasingly eclipsed party loyalty as the driving forces of Canadian politics (Anderson and Stephenson, 2011). People are more likely than they were in 1950 to vote for different political parties in successive elections.

We may also illustrate the decline of consensus by considering the fate of big historical projects. For most of the last two centuries, consensus throughout the world was built around such monumental projects. Various political and social movements convinced people they could take history into their own hands and create a glorious future just

by signing up. German Nazism was one such historical project. Its followers expected the Reich to enjoy a thousand years of power. Communism was an even bigger historical project, mobilizing hundreds of millions of people for a future that promised to end inequality and injustice for all time. However, the biggest and most successful historical project was not so much a social movement as a powerful idea—the belief that progress is inevitable, that life will always improve, mainly because of the spread of democracy and scientific innovation.

The twentieth century was unkind to big historical projects. Russian communism lasted 74 years. German Nazism endured a mere 12. The idea of progress fell on hard times as 100 million soldiers and civilians died in wars; the forward march of democracy took wrong turns into fascism, communism, regimes based on religious fanaticism, and populism; and climate change due to the burning of fossil fuels threatened the planet. In the postmodern era, more and more people recognize that apparent progress, including scientific advances, often has negative consequences (Easton, 2011). As the poet E.E. Cummings once wrote, "nothing recedes like progress." Postmodernism worries many parents, teachers, politicians, religious leaders, and professors. Given the eclectic mixing of cultural elements from different times and places, the erosion of authority, and the decline of consensus around core values, how can we make binding decisions? How can we govern? How can we teach children and adolescents the difference between right and wrong? How can we transmit accepted literary tastes and artistic standards from one generation to the next? These are the kinds of issues that plague people in positions of authority today.

Although their concerns are legitimate, many people seem not to have considered the flip side of the coin: The postmodern condition as described above empowers ordinary people and makes them more responsible for their own fate. It renders them more tolerant and appreciative of ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual groups other than their own—no small matter in a world torn by group conflict. The postmodern attitude encourages a healthy skepticism about rosy and naive scientific and political promises. And it frees people to reject religious, ethnic, and other identities imposed on them by others.

CANADA: THE FIRST POSTMODERN CULTURE?

Until the mid-1960s, most sociologists' image of Canadians was that of a stodgy people: peaceful, conservative, respectful of authority, and therefore quite unlike our US cousins.

According to conventional wisdom, the United States was born in open rebellion against the British motherland. Its Western frontier was lawless. Vast opportunities for striking it rich bred a spirit of individualism. Thus, US culture became an anti-authoritarian culture.

Canada developed differently according to the conventional view. It became an independent country not through a revolutionary upheaval but in a gradual, evolutionary manner. The North-West Mounted Police and two hierarchical churches (Roman Catholic and Anglican) established themselves on the Western frontier *before* the era of mass settlement, allowing for the creation of an orderly society rather than an US-style Wild West. Beginning with the Hudson's Bay Company, large corporations quickly came to dominate the Canadian economy, hampering individualism and the entrepreneurial spirit. Thus, Canadian culture became a culture of deference to authority. That, at least, was the common view until the 1960s (Lipset, 1963).

Although the contrast between deferential Canadian culture and anti-authoritarian American culture may have had some validity half a century ago, it is an inaccurate characterization today (Adams, 2004; Adams and MacDonald, 2015). As we have seen, the questioning of authority spread throughout the Western world beginning in the 1960s. Nowhere did it spread as quickly and thoroughly as in Canada. Canadians previously expressed more confidence in big business than Americans did, but surveys now show the opposite. Canadians were once more religious than Americans were, but that is no longer the case. Fewer Canadians (in percentage terms) say they believe in God, and fewer

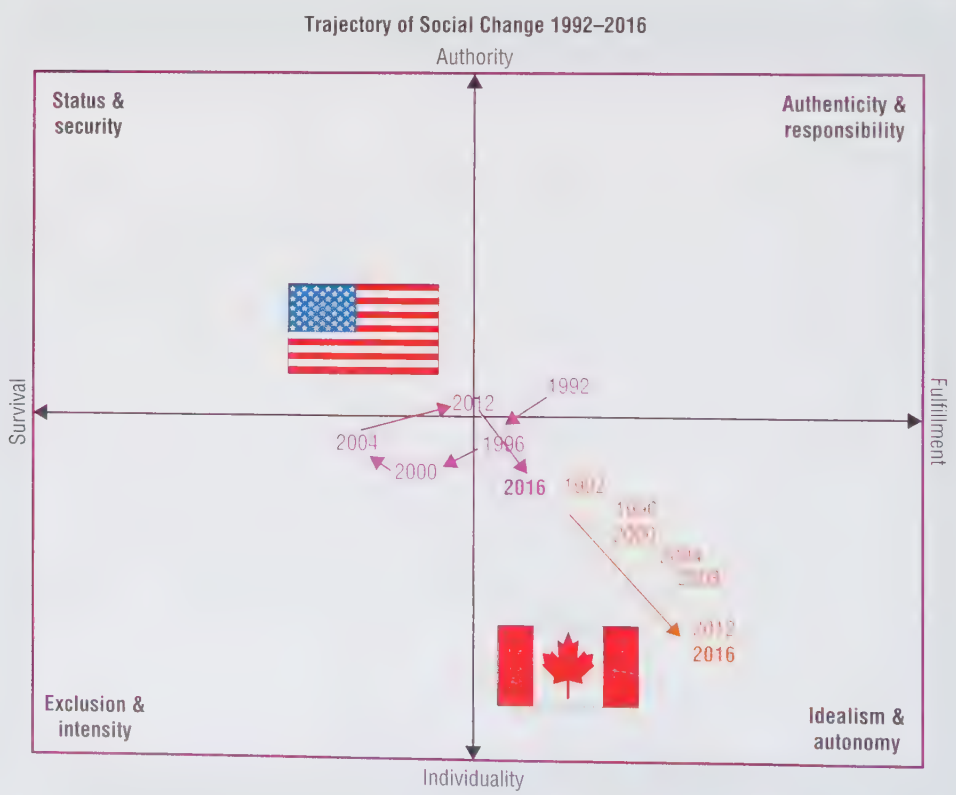
attend weekly religious services. Confidence in government has eroded more quickly in Canada than in the United States. Americans are more patriotic than Canadians are, according more respect to the state. Finally, Americans are more likely than Canadians are to regard the traditional nuclear family as the ideal family form and to think of deviations from tradition—same-sex couples, single-parent families, cohabitation without marriage—as the source of a whole range of social problems. Thus, whether sociologists examine attitudes toward the family, the state, the government, religion, or big business, they now find that Americans are more deferential to traditional institutional authority than Canadians are.

Because Canadians are less deferential to traditional institutional authority than Americans are, some commentators say that Canadians lack a distinct culture. For example, American patriotism sparks awareness of great national accomplishments in art, war, sports, and science. Anthems, rituals, myths, and celebrations commemorate these accomplishments and give Americans a keen sense of who they are and how they differ from non-Americans. Not surprisingly, therefore, a larger percentage of Americans than Canadians think of themselves in unhyphenated terms—as "Americans" plain and simple rather than, say, Italian-Americans. In Canada, a larger percentage of the population thinks of itself in dual-nationality terms; compared with the Americans, our identity is qualified, even tentative.

Does this mean that Canadians lack a distinct national culture? Hardly. Canada continues its trend toward postmodernism as its values become more progressive and secular. For decades, the Canadian pollster Michael Adams has been tracking the trajectory of value change in Canada and the United States. The divergent paths of the two countries are summarized in Figure 3.5. Clearly, Canada, unlike the United States, is on a postmodern path.

FIGURE 3.5

Changing Value Trajectories of Canada and the United States



Source: Michael Adams, "Fire and Ice Revisited: American and Canadian Social Values in the Age of Trump and Trudeau," Presentation to the YMCA North American Network CEO/CVO 2017 Conference, October 20, 2017. Used with permission of The Environics Institute for Survey Research.

In short, Canadian culture *is* distinctive, and its chief distinction may be that it qualifies us as the first thoroughly postmodern society.

Time for Review

- How has the rights revolution contributed to cultural diversity in Canada?
- How does multiculturalism in practice differ from multiculturalism as a Canadian value?
- What are the cultural advantages and disadvantages of the globalization of English?
- What societal features characterize a postmodern nation?
- In what ways does Canadian culture differ from the culture of the United States? In what ways is it similar?

Culture as Constraint

We noted earlier that culture has two faces that exist simultaneously. One we labelled "freedom," the other "constraint." Diversity, globalization, and postmodernism are aspects of the new freedoms that culture allows us today. On the other hand, you will now learn that rationalization, consumerism, and cultural capital act as constraining forces on our lives. They increase social control and reinforce privilege.

RATIONALIZATION AND TIME USE

Max Weber introduced the idea of **rationalization** to describe (1) the most efficient way of attaining goals, and (2) the unintended, negative consequences of doing so. He believed that rationalization constrains all aspects of life, making it seem increasingly as if we are living inside an "iron cage." According to Weber, rationalization is one of the most restrictive aspects of modern culture.

Rationalization is the application of the most efficient means to achieve given goals and the unintended, negative consequences of doing so.

The constraining effects of rationalization become clear when we consider the way we measure and use time. Clocks did not always determine the pace of daily life. Textile factory owners installed the first mechanical clocks in public squares in Germany 700 years ago. Their aim was to increase productivity. The clocks signalled the beginning of the workday, the timing of meals, and quitting time. Workers were accustomed to enjoying a flexible and vague work schedule regulated only approximately by the seasons and the rising and setting of the Sun. The regimentation imposed by the work clocks made their lives harder. The workers staged uprisings to silence the clocks, but to no avail. City officials sided with employers and imposed fines for ignoring the work clocks (Thompson, 1967).

Today, few people rebel against the work clock. This is especially true of big-city couples who are employed full-time in the paid labour force and have preteen children. For them, life often seems an endless round of waking up at 6:30 a.m.; getting everyone washed and dressed; preparing the kids' lunches; getting them out the door in time for the school bus or the car pool; driving to work through rush-hour traffic; facing the speed-up at work that resulted from the recent downsizing; returning home to clean up the dishes and help with homework; getting the kids washed, brushed, and into bed; and (if they have not brought some office work home) grabbing an hour of TV before the story repeats itself. Life is typically less hectic for residents of small towns, unmarried people, couples without children, retirees, and the unemployed. But the lives of most people are so packed with activities that almost a third of Canadians report having no time for fun (Statistics Canada, 2011a). After 700 years of conditioning,

iPhones and other personal technologies allow people to stay in touch with friends and work every waking moment. Many people have mixed feelings about these devices. Sometimes they seem pleasurable and efficient. At other times, they prevent relaxation and intimacy. As such, they typify the two faces of culture.

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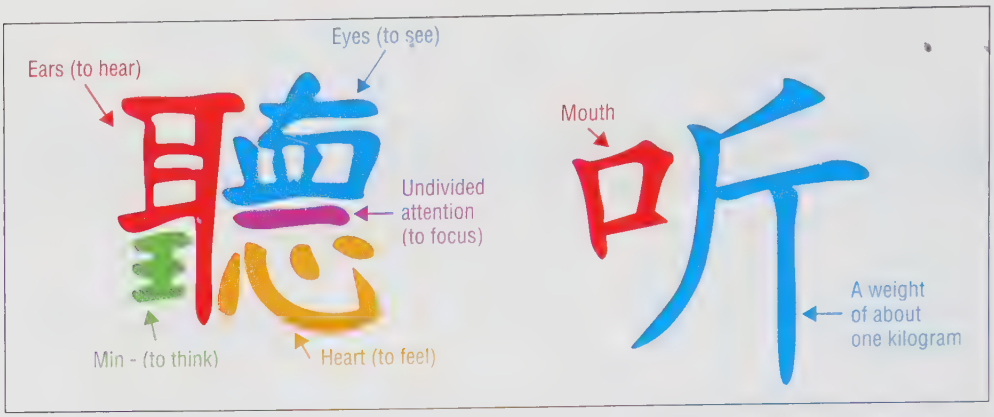


Reprinted here are the Chinese characters for "listening" *(t'ing)* in traditional Chinese script (left) and simplified, modern script (right). Each character comprises several word-symbols. In classical script, listening is depicted as a process involving the eyes, the ears, and the heart. It implies that listening demands the utmost empathy and involves the whole person. In contrast, modern script depicts listening as something that involves merely one person speaking and the other "weighing" speech. Modern Chinese script has been rationalized. Has empathy been lost in the process?

it seems natural that we allow clocks to regulate our activities. In reality, there is nothing natural about it.

The regulation of time does help us achieve goals. For example, it ensures efficiency, as well as maximizing the amount of work that is done in a day. In addition, regulating time enables trains to run on schedule, and it ensures that school classes and business meetings start on time. However, many people complain that life has become too hectic to enjoy fully. Thus, in recent decades, the percentage of Canadians working non-standard hours (other than 9 to 5) has increased from 23 percent to 29 percent. The percentage of Canadians who say they routinely experience a serious "time crunch" has gone up from 16 percent to 20 percent. Recent research indicates only 20 percent of Canadian families eat together more than twice a week (Fieldhouse, 2016).

CONSUMERISM

Consumerism is the tendency to define ourselves in terms of the goods we purchase.

The second constraining aspect of culture that we will examine is **consumerism**, the tendency to define ourselves in terms of the goods and services we purchase.

Recent innovations in advertising take advantage of our tendency to define ourselves in terms of the goods we purchase. For example, when channel surfing and the use of personal video recorders became widespread, advertisers realized they had a problem. Viewers started skipping TV ads that cost millions of dollars to produce. As a result, advertisers had to think up new ways of drawing products to the attention of consumers. One idea they hit on was paying to have their products appear as props in TV shows and movies. They realized that when Brad Pitt or some other big star drinks a can of Coke or drives a BMW, members of the audience tend to associate the product with the star. Wanting to be like the star, they are more likely to buy the product. The product becomes a symbol of what many viewers want to be, again demonstrating that consumerism, like rationalization, acts as a powerful constraint on our lives.

Have we come to depend too heavily on the work clock? Harold Lloyd in *Safety Last!* (1923).

United Archives GmbH/Alamy

The effectiveness of advertising encourages businesses to produce even more advertising. As advertising becomes more pervasive, it becomes accepted as a normal part of daily life. In fact, people often *become* ads. They proudly display designer labels as marks of their status and identity. Advertisers teach us to associate the words *Gucci* and *Nike* with different kinds of people, and when people display these labels on their clothes, they are telling us something about the kind of people they are. Advertising becomes us.

The rationalization process, when applied to the production of goods and services, enables us to produce more efficiently, to have more of just about everything than our parents did. But it is consumerism that ensures that all of the goods that are produced are bought. Of course, people living in the world's rich countries have lots of choice.

We can select from dozens of styles of running shoes, cars, and all the rest. We can also choose to buy items that help to define us as members of a particular **subculture**, adherents of a set of distinctive values, norms, and practices within a larger culture. But regardless of individual tastes and inclinations, nearly all of us have one thing in common: We tend to be good consumers. We are motivated by advertising, which is based on the accurate insight that people will tend to be considered social outcasts if they fail to conform to stylish trends. By creating those trends, advertisers push us to buy, even if doing so requires that we work more and accumulate debt (Parkinson, 2016). That is why North Americans' "shop-till-you-drop" lifestyle prompted French sociologist Jean Baudrillard to remark pointedly that even what is best in North America is compulsory (Baudrillard, 1988). Many sociologists say that consumerism, like rationalization, acts as a powerful constraint on our lives (see Box 3.2, Sociology and the Media: Smartphones, Social Media, and the Two Faces of Culture).

A subculture is a set of distinctive values, norms, and practices within a larger culture.

Untitled (I shop therefore I am) 1987. Copyright © Barbara Kruger. Courtesy Mary Boone Gallery, New York.

Consumerism ties identities to purchases.

FROM COUNTERCULTURE TO SUBCULTURE

In concluding our discussion of culture as a constraining force, we note that consumerism is remarkably effective at taming countercultures. **Countercultures** are subversive subcultures. They oppose dominant values and seek to replace them. The hippies of the 1960s formed a counterculture and so do environmentalists today.

Countercultures are subversive subcultures that oppose dominant values and seek to replace them.

Countercultures rarely pose a serious threat to social stability. Most often, the system of social control, of rewards and punishments, keeps countercultures at bay. In our society, consumerism acts as a social control mechanism that normally prevents countercultures from disrupting the social order. It does that by transforming deviations from mainstream culture into means of making money and by enticing rebels to become entrepreneurs (Frank and Weiland, 1997). The development of hip-hop helps to illustrate the point (Brym, 2018: 13–31).

Hip-hop originated in the American inner city in the 1970s. At the time, manufacturing industries were leaving for suburban or foreign locales, where land values were lower and labour was less expensive. Unemployment among Black youth rose to more than 40 percent. At the same time, many middle-class Blacks left the inner city for the suburbs. Their migration robbed the remaining young people of successful role models. It also eroded the taxing capacity of municipal governments, leading to a decline in public services. Meanwhile, the US public elected conservative governments at the state and federal levels. They cut school and welfare budgets, thus deepening the destitution of ghetto life (Piven and Cloward, 1977: 264–361, 1993; Wilson, 1987).

With few legitimate prospects for advancement, poor Black American youth in the inner city turned increasingly to crime and, in particular, to the drug trade. In the late 1970s, cocaine was expensive and demand for the drug was flat. Consequently, in the early 1980s, Colombia's Medellin drug cartel introduced a less expensive form of cocaine called "crack." Crack was inexpensive, it offered a quick and intense high, and it was highly addictive. It offered many people a temporary escape from hopelessness and soon became wildly popular in the inner city. Turf wars spread as gangs tried to outgun each other for control of the local traffic. The sale and use of crack became so widespread it corroded much of what was left of the US inner city Black community (Davis, 1990).

The shocking conditions described above gave rise to a shocking musical form: hip-hop. Stridently at odds with the values and tastes of both Whites and middle-class Black Americans, hip-hop described and glorified the mean streets of the inner city while holding the

'Twas the night before Boxing Day—specifically, 3 a.m. on 26 December in Winnipeg. The temperature with windchill is –40°C. The lineup for the annual Boxing Day sale keeps growing with three hours to go before the store opens. Similar scenes are witnessed across Canada.

Marc Gallant/Winnipeg Free Press/Canadian Press

BOX 3.2 Sociology and the Media

SMARTPHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND THE TWO FACES OF CULTURE

DECEMBER 20, 1906.] PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI. 451
FORECASTS FOR 1907.
IV.—DEVELOPMENT OF WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY. SCENE IN HYDE PARK
These two figures are not communicating with one another. The lady is receiving an amatory message and the gentleman some racing results.

TopFoto/Punch 26 December 1906

IV.—Development of Wireless Telegraphy. Scene in Hyde Park
[These two figures are not communicating with one another. The lady is receiving an amatory message, and the gentleman some racing results.]

The data are in, and they show that most Canadians find digital technology liberating. Some 77 percent of Canadians over the age of 17 report that digital technology helps them communicate with others, 66 percent claim it saves them time, and 52 percent say it helps them make more informed decisions. For Canadians under the age of 45, the corresponding percentages are significantly higher (Figure 3.6).

Wireless communication has a downside too, as has been evident for some time (see the cartoon on the right). For example, smartphones and social media shrink attention spans. Research sponsored by Microsoft Canada shows that the average attention span of adults fell by a third from 2000 to 2013. Among younger Canadians, attention spans are shrinking the most (Microsoft Canada, 2015: 6–7).

What happens when you don't have your smartphone with you? One social psychologist wanted to find out. He asked university undergraduates to give him their smartphones. He then had each of them spend 15 minutes alone in a lab. During that time they could do only one of two things: sit quietly and think or push a button that gave them an electric shock. Twenty-five percent of the women and 67 percent of the men were so bored sitting quietly and thinking that they chose to shock themselves for entertainment (Wilson et al., 2014). Desperate circumstances call for desperate measures.

Sean Parker, co-founder of Napster (the first Internet file-sharing program) and the first president of Facebook, says he knows why attention spans are shrinking. According to Parker, social media platforms are designed so users constantly expect to receive a reward such as a "like" or gain new knowledge such as the latest gossip about Kim Kardashian. Receiving such a reward releases a spurt of dopamine in the brain. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter widely believed to be associated with addiction. Research supports the view that social media platforms are built to get people addicted to them so audiences will grow and audience members will remain logged on, thus allowing platform owners to earn more ad revenue (Smith, 2018). One study found that British smartphone users say they look at their phones 75 times a day—but under observation the figure turned out to be more like 150 times a day, which works out to once every 6.4 waking minutes. A series of US studies found that the number of times Americans touched their smartphone screens grew from 8 billion in 2015 to 12 billion in 2017. The average number of minutes per day people spend on social media increased by 50 percent from 2012 to 2017. Most Canadians believe that smartphones and social media liberate us, and in some sense they do—but it turns out they also constrain us by becoming a compulsion (Andrew-Gee, 2018; Deloitte, 2017).

The effects of such constraint include neglect of loved ones, decreased capacity to focus, and increased risk of anxiety and depression among children and adolescents (Andrew-Gee, 2018). Here we have space to discuss just the first effect, and only briefly.

Nobody likes to be ignored, so you've likely been annoyed when someone you are trying to talk to starts texting on her smartphone, sometimes for minutes at a time. For babies and children, the consequences of such distraction are more serious than mere annoyance. Women are increasing

police, the mass media, and other pillars of society in contempt. Furthermore, hip-hop tried to offend middle-class sensibilities, Black and White, by using highly offensive language.

In 1988, more than a decade after its first stirrings, hip-hop reached its political high point with the release of the album *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* by Chuck D and Public Enemy. In "Don't Believe the Hype," Chuck D accused the mass media of maliciously

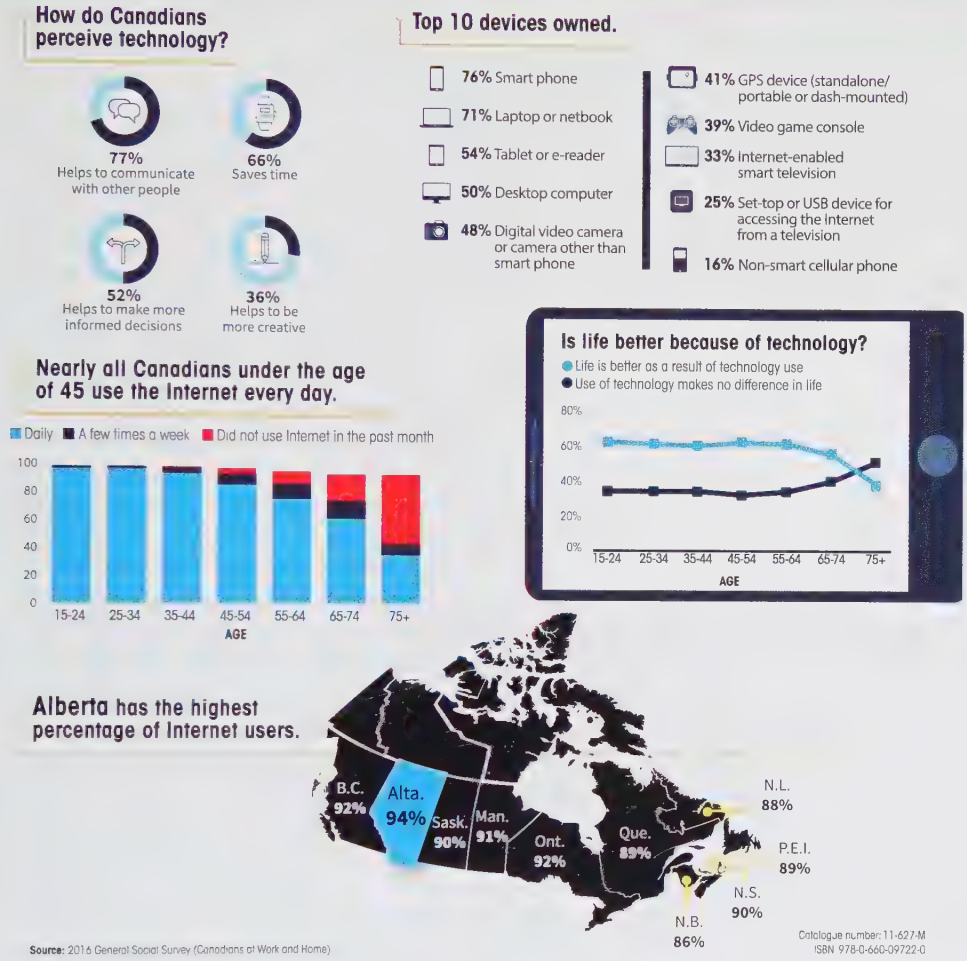


FIGURE 3.6
The Internet and Digital Technology

Source: Statistics Canada, "The Internet and digital technology" (2018). Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/index-eng.htm

their smartphone use while breastfeeding, breaking eye contact with their babies. That is unfortunate because research shows that eye contact between breastfeeding mothers and babies aids communication, learning, and emotional bonding. Research also shows that many children between the ages of 4 and 18 are developing a deep sense of frustration and loss because their parents often are pulled away from them by their cellphones (Steiner-Adair and Barker, 2013). Of course, nobody wants babies and children to be deprived of necessary emotional support, which is essential for healthy development. However, the constraints imposed by smartphones and social media are apparently often strong enough to override our thoughtful preferences concerning our own kids.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways has your smartphone made your freer?
2. In what ways has your smartphone constrained you?

distributing lies. In "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos," he charged the FBI and the CIA with assassinating the two great leaders of the Black American community in the 1960s, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. In "Party for Your Right to Fight," he blamed the federal government for organizing the fall of the Black Panthers, the radical Black nationalist party of the 1960s. Here, it seemed, was an angry expression of subcultural revolt that could not be tamed.

However, the seduction of big money did much to mute the political force of hip-hop. As early as 1982, with the release of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "The Message," hip-hop began to win acclaim from mainstream rock music critics. With the success of Run-D.M.C. and Public Enemy in the late 1980s, it became clear there was a big audience for hip-hop. Significantly, much of that audience was composed of White youths. As one music critic wrote, they "relished . . . the subversive 'otherness' that the music and its purveyors represented" (Neal, 1999: 144). Sensing the opportunity for profit, major media corporations, such as Time/Warner, Sony, CBS/Columbia, and BMG Entertainment, signed distribution deals with the small independent recording labels that had formerly been the exclusive distributors of hip-hop CDs. In 1988, *Yo! MTV Raps* debuted on MTV. The program brought hip-hop to middle America.

Most hip-hop recording artists proved they were eager to forgo political relevancy for commerce. For instance, WU-Tang Clan started a line of clothing called WU-Wear, and, with the help of major hip-hop recording artists, companies as diverse as Tommy Hilfiger, Timberland, Starter, and Versace began marketing clothing influenced by ghetto styles. Independent labels such as Phat Farm and Fubu also prospered. Puff Daddy reminded his audience in his 1999 CD *Forever:* "N—— get money, that's simply the plan." According to *Forbes* magazine, he became one of the country's 40 richest men under 40. By 2005, having renamed himself Diddy, he had his own line of popular clothing.

The members of Run-D.M.C. once said that they "don't want nobody's name on my behind" but those days were long past by the early 1990s. Hip-hop was no longer just a musical form but a commodity with spinoffs. Rebellion had been turned into mass consumption. Hip-hop's radicalism had given way to the lures of commerce. A counterculture had become a subculture.

Radical political currents in hip-hop still exist. For example, in 2012, Macklemore and Lewis's first hit, "Same Love," criticized homophobia in hip-hop and promoted gay rights. Their single "Thrift Shop," which topped the *Billboard* "Hot 100" for six weeks and won a Grammy award for best rap song in 2014, is a critique of mindless consumerism. Kendrick Lamar's 2015 single "Alright," became a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement, which protests the disproportionate police violence visited on Black people. Kendrick Lamar won a coveted Pulitzer Prize for his work in 2018. However, in terms of popularity, he is a minor current in the North American hip-hop universe. A list of the 100 wealthiest hip-hop artists in 2019 ranks him 49th. Macklemore ranks 68th ("Top 100 Richest Rappers," 2019). Other radical North American hip-hop artists, such as Travis Scott, XXX, and Post Malone do not appear on the list. Significantly, only five women appear on the list. The wealthiest, Nicki Minaj, ranked 24th, with Lil' Kim next in 62nd place.

Radical currents seem to be more common outside North America. In Senegal, the playing of hip-hop highly critical of the government is widely believed to have helped topple the ruling party in the 2000 election. In France, North African youth living in impoverished and segregated slums use hip-hop to express their political discontent, and some analysts say the genre helped mobilize youth for antigovernment rioting in 2005 (Akwagyiram, 2009). "*Rais Lebled*" [Mr. President], a song by Tunisian rapper El Général, became the anthem of young people participating in the democratic uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Arab world in 2011: "Mr. President, your people are dying / People are eating rubbish / Look at what is happening / Miseries everywhere, Mr. President / I talk with no fear / Although I know I will get only trouble / I see injustice everywhere" (Ghosh, 2011).

In North America, however, hip-hop has become for the most part an apolitical commodity that increasingly appeals to a racially heterogeneous, middle-class audience. As one of hip-hop's leading analysts and academic sympathizers writes, "the discourse of ghetto reality or 'hood authenticity remains largely devoid of political insight or progressive intent" (Forman, 2001: 121). The fate of hip-hop is testimony to the capacity of consumerism to change countercultures into mere subcultures, thus constraining dissent and rebellion.

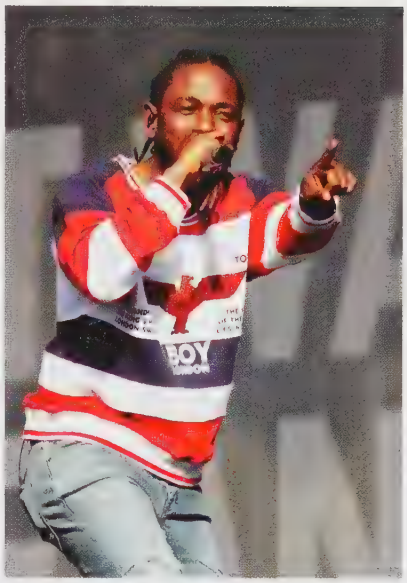
CULTURAL CAPITAL

Finally, let us consider the constraining effect of "cultural capital." Capital comes in many forms. Financial capital (money) is one of them. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu

(1986) identified cultural capital as another important resource for accomplishing goals. **Cultural capital** refers to the beliefs, tastes, norms, and values that people draw on in their everyday life. People with different socialization histories occupy different social positions and have different amounts and types of cultural capital. The Indigenous female who has spent most of her life living on an isolated reserve in northern Saskatchewan likely has very different beliefs, tastes, norms, and values than the man from a privileged family of English origin who heads a large corporation in Vancouver.

Cultural capital is not just about differences. It is about differences with important social consequences. Communities and organizations are bounded by different types of cultural capital, which form an important component of what makes them distinct. In a stratified society, the distinctive cultural capital of privileged groups and organizations is used as a means of protecting privilege and keeping outsiders out. This gatekeeping function occurs when dominant groups define their specific kinds of cultural capital as prerequisites for recruitment and selection.

As Bourdieu emphasizes, differences in cultural capital are connected to social classes. For instance, public schools are mostly governed by middle-class cultural capital. Success does not depend solely on intelligence and hard work. Succeeding in the school system requires being comfortable with a wide range of expectations rooted in cultural capital. Students need to be punctual. They need to speak "proper" English. They need to sit still. They need to be courteous. When students from lower-class or immigrant backgrounds attend such schools, the cultural capital at their command may be misaligned with existing school culture. Such misalignment makes adaptation more challenging. It commonly results in the subordination and marginalization of non-middle-class students.



Twocoms/Shutterstock

Kendrick Lamar

Cultural capital refers to the beliefs, tastes, norms, and values that people draw on in their everyday life.

The same process of social sorting takes place in the employment market. How comfortable would you be if a prospective employer took you to a sophisticated restaurant where your manners were deficient, the conversation involved references to books and ballets you knew nothing about, and you were asked for opinions about political policies that you didn't understand? You would likely end the dinner with a clear sense that you would not be a good fit with this place of employment. The potential employer would likely draw the same conclusion. Although cultural capital is symbolic, not material, it plays an important role in shaping your fate in society.

In an era when individualism and autonomy are valued, it is not surprising to see the emergence of pockets of resistance to cultural constraints. Culture jamming is a good example. **Culture jamming** involves individuals and groups challenging dominant cultural beliefs, tastes, norms, and values. Cultural jammers resist mainstream culture in creative ways, including altering billboards, conducting street protests, and cloning websites (Gramigna, 2012). The point of this activity is to draw attention to the cultural assumptions and consequences of consumerist culture. It is a form of cultural consciousness-raising. The Canadian magazine *Adbusters* is well known internationally for promoting cultural jamming aimed at transforming corporate advertisements into anti-consumption, anti-capitalist campaigns. In fact, the idea for the Occupy Movement came from *Adbusters*.

Cultural jamming refers to the creative methods used by individuals and groups to challenge dominant cultural beliefs, tastes, norms, and values.

The Occupy Movement began in New York City in 2011 as Occupy Wall Street. Occupy Wall Street mobilized protesters against the growing social and economic inequality rooted in corporate greed and corruption. Beginning with protesters occupying a park near Wall Street, the protest gained worldwide publicity. Soon Occupy protests were replicated in dozens of cities. The slogan for the Occupy protest movement was "We are the 99%," referring to the recent dramatic wealth accumulation among the richest 1 percent of the population. The entire Occupy Wall Street movement originated from a senior *Adbusters* editor distributing an email to magazine subscribers proposing a peaceful protest by occupying a location near Wall Street. When the perceived injustice of existing cultural arrangements is sparked by individual protest and fanned by a social organization supported by social media, the result is considerable pressure on the status quo.

Cultural jamming illustrates the paradoxical nature of culture. People create culture to aid problem solving and adaptation but, once created, culture becomes an entity to which humans must adapt to varying degrees. Culture generates possibilities for autonomy and independence at the same time as it constrains individual conduct. Languages that direct our thinking are the same vehicles by which we express our unique thoughts and feelings. Culture creates mass media from iPhones to Twitter accounts and, in turn, these media create content that transforms symbolic culture. Cultural production is not a static phenomenon but a complicated interactive flow that is both the product and producer of human action.

Virtual Culture as Freedom and Constraint

This chapter began by emphasizing that culture is essentially an abstract system of shared symbols. It exists in our minds; it is imaginary. Increasingly, however, culture also exists on computers, the Internet, and social media as we use smartphones, Facebook, and multiplayer games to communicate with others. Much of our culture has become "virtual culture," especially among young, educated people (Brake, 2014).

Today's children are among the first to be exposed to virtual culture and to experience its effects. New mothers nurse their infants with smartphones at hand. Playground accidents are rising because caregivers talking on their cellphones are distracted (Glatter, 2015). While driving, some parents engage in "passback," handing their phone to their child in the rear car seat in the hope of getting some peace and quiet. Inside and outside school, phones and tablets are replacing books, blocks, and modelling clay. No one doubts the fantastic world of virtual culture is compelling, sometimes to the point of addiction (Kim, 2015).

Based on decades of research into the effects of digital technologies on families, work, and education, sociologists have identified three important lessons that virtual culture teaches children: (1) You will always be heard. (2) You can direct your attention wherever you want. (3) You will never have to be alone. Imagine the sense of liberation these lessons provide! But note, too, that these lessons are contrary to those we learn from conventional cultures, which instruct us that the human experience is optimized through engaged, face-to-face communication with others. In conventional cultures, you will not always be heard, you need to pay attention even when you might prefer otherwise, and you have to come to terms with solitude.

Futurists predict that we will escape from conventional realities into virtual ones. Perhaps Ray Kurzweil's prediction will be realized: "By the 2030s, virtual reality will be totally realistic and compelling and we will spend most of our time in virtual environments. . . . We will all become virtual humans" (quoted in Kim, 2015). Because virtual culture is both new and emerging, it is too early to tell what its longer term impact will be. It is fair to say, though, that we have embarked on a giant experiment without a control group. Like all culture, virtual culture has a taken-for-granted quality, providing a sense that the way things are is the way they should be. But culture is constraining as well as liberating, and we are well advised to pay attention to what is given up for what we get.

Time for Review

- How has consumerism constrained your life? Has it made you freer in any way?
- Is cultural jamming a counterculture or a subculture?
- How is cultural capital similar to, and different from, financial capital?
- How might "passback" affect parent-child interaction in a vehicle?

Summary

1. **What role does culture play in generating meaning and solving problems?**
   By itself, concrete experience is meaningless. Experience must be interpreted to be meaningful. Interpretations require applying cultural concepts and ideas to concrete experiences. The meaning of all individual and collective experience is rooted in culture. Whatever challenges environments pose to individuals and communities, the solutions to such problems are found in the possibilities and constraints afforded by culture.

2. **How do biological explanations differ from cultural explanations?**
   Few biologists and psychologists deny the influence of the cultural environment on human behaviour, but some do. They argue that surviving in harsh environments requires adaptations that, over time, are selected into the gene pool. Presumably, these adaptations shape our conduct because it is hardwired into our DNA. However, it is easily demonstrated that variation in human behaviour is in fact strongly modified by the cultural environment.

3. **What do functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory teach us about the operation of culture?**
   Functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory teach us that the character and operation of culture in everyday life are multi-faceted. Functionalism emphasizes how elements of culture contribute to social order by guiding people to support collective goals. Conflict theory emphasizes how culture is a site of ongoing struggle between more and less advantaged groups, with advantaged groups holding the upper hand. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes how people are the agents of culture, creatively shaping and interpreting it and, to some degree, choosing how culture influences them.

4. **How does culture operate as a liberating force?**
   In some respects, culture provides us with increasing opportunities to exercise our freedom. The rights revolution, multiculturalism, globalization, and postmodernism reflect this tendency.

5. **How does culture operate as a constraining force?**
   In other respects, culture constrains us, putting limits on our actions and on what we can become. The growth of rationalization, the spread of consumerism, the rise of virtual culture, and the impact of cultural capital are prime examples of the constraining aspect of culture.

4 Socialization

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Describe the degree to which social interaction unleashes human abilities, including the ability to see ourselves as different from others.
- Evaluate how stages in life are influenced by the historical period in which people live.
- Contrast the declining socializing influence of the family with the rising socializing influence of schools, peer groups, and the mass media over the past century.
- Compare the greater speed, frequency, and comprehensiveness of identity change today with the lower speed, frequency, and comprehensiveness of identity change just a few decades ago.

The Consequences of Social Isolation in Childhood

In 1800, a 10- or 11-year-old boy was found alone in the woods in southern France. He was filthy, naked, and unable to speak, and had not been toilet trained. The boy was taken to Paris to be scrutinized by medical experts. How had he come to be living in the forest? A scar on his neck suggested a horrific past. Was the boy an unwanted child, left to die in the woods after an unknown person slit his throat? No one knew.

Equally challenging was determining what was wrong with the boy, who became known as "the savage of Aveyron." Some experts said the boy was intellectually disabled, others that he was deaf and unable to speak. One ambitious young doctor, Jean Marc Itard, expressed a different view. He hypothesized that the boy's strangeness might be due to the effects of having been raised in extreme isolation. Intrigued by the mysterious boy, Itard took over his care, called him Victor, and conducted an initial assessment of his capabilities. Next, Itard tried to teach Victor a few basic skills. The task was daunting. As he began his work, Itard recorded in his journal that Victor was a "disgustingly dirty child affected with spasmodic movements, and often convulsions, who swayed back and forth ceaselessly like certain animals in a zoo, who bit and scratched those who opposed him, who showed no affection for those who took care of him, and who was, in short, indifferent to everything and attentive to nothing" (Itard, cited in Lane, 1976: 4).

Itard's efforts to train Victor led to great fame for the doctor but little success with Victor. After a few years of trying to teach Victor how to read and communicate with others, Itard gave up. He wrote up his findings in a formal report, concluding that the project to educate and civilize Victor had been a total failure. Despite intensive training, Victor never mastered speech, displayed limited intellectual engagement, and failed to develop emotional attachments to anyone but his caregivers (Benzaquen, 2006).

Sadly, over the years, other cases have emerged of children who lacked human contact at a critical stage in their development. An especially shocking case, because of its mass scale, became known in 1989, shortly after the rule of a corrupt Romanian dictator came to an abrupt end when he and his wife were executed by their own people on Christmas Day. In the following months, the world learned the shocking details of how children had been treated by the regime. Because of harsh economic conditions, nearly 100 000 children had been abandoned by their families. Left in the hands of the state, these children were warehoused in orphanages that provided little food and even less love. The toll appeared greatest for those who had been abandoned at birth. Starving and listless, many babies were strangely also cross-eyed. Had they developed an illness? No. Because they had spent their short lives lying on their backs and staring at the blank ceiling overhead, these infants had no opportunity to focus on objects, an activity that would have allowed their vision to develop properly.

Stunned by the deplorable conditions of the orphanages, families from around the world descended on Romania to adopt the children. Approximately 600 of these children were adopted by Canadian parents. Seizing the opportunity to learn more about the long-term effects of early life deprivation, researchers in Canada and elsewhere began to study some of these children. They wondered whether the children could overcome their early neglect and grow up to become functioning adults.

The results were mixed. A decade later, Romanian orphans who had been adopted by Canadian parents had caught up to Canadian children in weight and height (Le Mare and Audet, 2006). However, as in Victor's case, researchers discovered that the emotional scars

Mary Evans Picture Library

Known as the savage of Aveyron, Victor never mastered speech, nor did he develop emotional bonds with others beyond those who took care of him.

of neglect run deep. The brains of the adopted Romanian children were smaller and less developed than they should have been, resulting in a wide array of emotional and intellectual deficits. As young adults, many of the former orphans reported struggling to fit in, and some were convicted of crimes.

The lesson seems clear. During the first few months of life, children must be exposed to other humans who will care for and love them. Otherwise, the neural structures that are responsible for emotional and intellectual development wither (Nelson, Fox, and Zeanah, 2014; Zeanah and Sonuga-Barke, 2016).

The examples of Victor and the Romanian orphans suggest that people can become fully human only if they undergo **socialization**. Socialization involves people learning to function in social life, and involves: (1) individuals taking on and disengaging from a series of roles, and (2) becoming aware of themselves as they interact with others. A **role** is the behaviour expected of a person occupying a particular position in society.

Socialization is the process by which people learn to function in social life and become aware of themselves as they interact with others.

A role is the behaviour expected of a person occupying a particular position in society.

Understanding socialization requires that we first examine the main theories of how a sense of self develops during childhood.

Time for Review

- What evidence suggests that children require contact with others to realize their human potential?
- How and why might prolonged social isolation affect adults differently from the way it affects young children?

Formation of the Self

Driven by elemental needs, infants cry out. Those who hear their cries, usually their parents, respond by providing the infant with food, comfort, and affection. At first, infants do not seem able to distinguish themselves from their main caregivers. However, infants begin to develop a self-image or sense of self as they engage in social interaction. The **self** refers to your ideas and attitudes about who you are as an independent being.

The self consists of your ideas and attitudes about who you are as an independent being.

Freud

Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud was the first to provide a social-scientific explanation of how the self develops (Freud, 1962 [1930], 1973 [1915–17]). He noted that infants begin to form a self-image when their demands are not immediately met. Thus, babies initially react with howls of protest when parents decide not to feed and comfort them every time they wake up in the middle of the night. However, with time, infants learn to eat more before going to sleep, sleep for longer periods, and go back to sleep when they wake up during the night. Infants also begin to realize that their needs are different from those of their parents, they exist independently of others, and they must balance their needs with the realities of life.

Through many such lessons in self-control, children eventually learn how to behave appropriately and develop a moral sense of right and wrong. Eventually, a personal conscience containing cultural standards forms. In addition, a psychological mechanism develops that normally balances the pleasure-seeking and restraining components of the self. Formerly, scholars believed that the self develops naturally like a seed germinates. In contrast, Freud argued that the self emerges only as a result of social interaction.

Cooley's Symbolic Interactionism

American scholars took an even more sociological approach to ideas about the emergence of the self. Notably, Charles Horton Cooley, an early contributor to the sociological study of

socialization and founder of the symbolic interactionist tradition, proposed the idea of the "looking-glass self" (Cooley, 1902).

Cooley observed that when we interact with others, they respond by gesturing and reacting to us. As a result, we are able to imagine how we are perceived by others, and can then judge how others evaluate us. Finally, we use these judgments to develop a self-concept or a set of feelings and ideas about who we are. Just as we see our reflection in a mirror, so we see our social selves reflected in people's responses to us (Cooley, 1902).

Consider that students may develop a negative self-concept when they are evaluated negatively by teachers, leading them to do poorly in school. In fact, poor performance may be due as much to teachers' negative evaluations as to students' innate abilities (Sanchez and Roda, 2003). This example demonstrates that people attach meaning to things (in this case, the student's self) in the course of face-to-face communication: the core insight of symbolic interactionism.

Mead

Like Freud, George Herbert Mead (1934) argued that a subjective and impulsive aspect of the self is present from birth. Moreover, he claimed that social interaction leads to the emergence of a repository of culturally approved standards as part of the self. Mead called the impulsive aspect of the self the **I**, and the objective, social component of the self the **me**. Freud held that denying the impulsive side of the self leads to the crystallization of the self's objective side. However, Mead believed that our uniquely human capacity to "take the role of the other" is the basis of the me.

The I, according to Mead, is the subjective and impulsive aspect of the self that is present from birth.

The me, according to Mead, is the objective component of the self that emerges as people communicate symbolically and learn to take the role of the other.

MEAD'S FOUR STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT: ROLE-TAKING

Mead saw the self as developing in four stages of role-taking:

1. Children begin learning to use language and other symbols by imitating the **significant others** in their lives, such as their mother and father.
2. Next, children pretend to be other people by role-playing in games such as "house," "school," and "doctor."
3. Then, by about the age of seven, children learn to simultaneously take the role of several other people while playing complex games. For example, an infielder in a baseball game needs to be aware of the expectations of everyone else in the infield. If the shortstop catches a line drive and wants to make a double play, she must almost instantly be aware that a runner is heading to second base and the person playing second base is expecting her throw. Hesitation will probably prevent her from executing the double play.
4. Finally, children begin taking the role of what Mead called the **generalized other**. Eventually, a person will come to understand that others consider her funny, temperamental, or intelligent. She will also realize that others reach this conclusion by employing the cultural standards of their society to evaluate her. The generalized other refers to a person's image of cultural standards and the ways in which others apply them to their assessment of her.

Significant others are people who play important roles in the early socialization experiences of children.

The generalized other, according to Mead, is a person's image of cultural standards and how they apply to him or her.

Some psychologists have analyzed the stages of development of cognitive skills—the style, complexity, and abstractness of thinking (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). Other psychologists have analyzed the stages of development of abstract moral thinking (Kohlberg, 1981). However, sociologists contend that the development of cognitive and moral skills involves more than the emergence of inborn characteristics. As we discuss in the next section, socialization is also influenced by the organization of society and an individual's place in it.

Time for Review

- What makes Cooley's depiction of the "looking-glass self" a *sociological* insight?
- According to Mead, what is the distinction between me and I?

At the Intersection of Biography and History

It is true that a newborn baby's interaction with caring adults sets socialization in motion, but socialization does not happen only at the beginning of life. Socialization is a lifelong process. From birth to death, the expectations and behaviour of the people around us change, and in response, we change, too.

Earlier, we discussed how the self emerges in stages. Yet the crystallization of the self is more than a developmental process. A person's potential is also shaped by the unique slice of history through which he or she lives. Said differently, success and failure occur in part because of circumstances beyond our control. We tend to think that we are masters of our destiny, but we are equally a product of our society: What we can become is made possible (or not) because of the historical circumstances in which we live.

Lisa Strohschein, one of this book's authors, knows this from her own family history. "My grandfather, James, was born on a farm in Holland in 1915. He married his childhood sweetheart and, in the hope of giving their growing family a better future, they immigrated to Ontario in the 1950s, raising seven sons and two daughters. They worked hard on their farm, but to make ends meet, James worked as a carpenter on the side. James had the uncanny ability to quickly add, subtract, multiply, and divide numbers in his head—a useful skill on the farm and in carpentry. All his children inherited James's skill as a human calculator. Five of his sons followed James into carpentry. When the computer age arrived, however, two sons put their skill with numbers to a new use. They studied computer science and became successful in a rapidly growing industry.

"My grandfather was proud of all his sons, but I remember him wondering aloud just before he died in 2005 what his own life would have looked like if he had been born in 1955 instead of 1915. It's an interesting sociological question that highlights the importance of history and society in the development of the self. Opportunities (and constraints) depend very much on the unique slice of history one lives through."

Society also plays an important role in how the socialization patterns of entire civilizations develop. Consider the difference between ancient China and ancient Greece. In ancient southern China, neighbouring rice farmers needed to cooperate, because of complex irrigation needs. Eventually, the irrigation system became so intricate, it had to be centrally and hierarchically organized by the state. These developments affected Chinese socialization patterns, which emphasized harmony, social order, consensus, and mutual social obligation.

Ancient Greece was less socially complex and more politically decentralized than ancient China was, largely because the country's hills and seashores led to the development of small-scale herding and fishing. Work was more individualized, less cooperative and collective, than in China, and Greeks experienced more personal freedom than the ancient Chinese did. Again, we find a relationship between work organization and socialization patterns. Ancient Greeks tended to raise their children to engage in debate rather than seek social harmony, and to seek individual freedom rather than become bound by social consensus. Ancient Chinese and Greek patterns of socialization were radically different, ultimately because of the contrasting socialization patterns that grew out of the different ways the Chinese and the Greeks organized work (Nisbett et al., 2001).

Sociologists who study socialization focus on the following questions: As individuals move through life, how does society shape their identities, attitudes, and behaviour? How do societies differ in the ways they organize life transitions, life stages, and life trajectories? What are the relationships among changing societies, changing biographical patterns, and the subjective experiences of the individual? In the next sections of this chapter, we touch on each of these questions (Shanahan and Macmillan, 2008).

The **life course** refers to the distinct phases of life through which people pass. These stages vary from one society and historical period to another.

Rites of passage are cultural ceremonies that mark the transition from one stage of life to another (e.g., baptisms, confirmations, weddings) or from life to death (funerals).

A Sociology of the Life Course

All individuals pass through distinct stages of life, which, taken together, sociologists call the **life course**. These stages are often marked by **rites of passage**, or rituals signifying the transition from one life stage to another (Fried and Fried, 1980). Among the best-known

rites of passage in Canada are baptism, confirmation, the bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah, high-school graduation, college or university convocation, the wedding ceremony, and the funeral. Rituals do not mark all transitions in the life course, however. For example, in Canada, people often complain about the "terrible twos," when toddlers defy parental demands in their attempt to gain autonomy. Similarly, when some Canadian men reach the age of about 40, they experience a "mid-life crisis," in which they attempt to defy the passage of time and regain their youth. (It never works.)

Some stages of the life course are established not just by norms but also by law. For example, most societies have laws that stipulate the minimum age for buying tobacco, drinking alcohol, driving a vehicle, and voting. Some societies also have a legal retirement age. Moreover, the duration of each stage of life differs from one society and historical period to the next. For example, there are no universal rules for when a person becomes an adult. In preindustrial societies, adulthood arrived soon after puberty. In Japan, a person becomes an adult at 20. In Canada, adulthood arrives at 18 (the legal voting age, and the legal drinking age in a few provinces) or 19 (the legal drinking age in the other provinces and the territories). Until the 1970s, the legal voting age was 21 and the legal drinking age ranged between 18 and 21.

Finally, although some life course events are universal—birth, puberty, marriage, and death—not all cultures attach the same significance to them. Thus, ritual practices marking these events vary. For example, formal puberty rituals in many preindustrial societies are extremely important because they mark the transition to adult responsibilities. However, adult responsibilities do not immediately follow puberty in industrial and postindustrial societies because of our prolonged period of childhood and adolescence. Therefore, formal puberty rituals are less important in such societies.

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

Even the number of life stages varies historically and across societies. For instance, childhood was a brief stage of development in medieval Europe (Ariès, 1962 [1960]). In contrast, childhood is a prolonged stage of development in rich societies today. Adolescence now follows childhood, but it is a phase of development that was virtually unknown just a few hundred years ago (Lesko, 2012).

How did childhood and adolescence come to be recognized as distinct stages of life? In preindustrial societies, children were considered small adults and were expected to adapt to the norms of the adult world as much as possible. For example, they started doing chores by the age of 5 and working full-time by the age of 10 or 12 to contribute to their families' well-being. By the age of 15 or 16, many were married and functioning as adults.

In Europe and North America, children followed this pattern until the late seventeenth century. At that point, childhood began to be viewed as a distinct stage of life. Well-off Europeans and North Americans started believing that boys should play games and receive an education so they could develop the emotional, physical, and intellectual skills they would need as adults. Girls, however, continued to be treated as "little women" (the title of Louisa May Alcott's 1869 novel) until the nineteenth century. Most working-class boys did not enjoy much of a childhood until the twentieth century, when the Western world adopted the idea of childhood as a separate and prolonged period of life for all children, regardless of gender and class.

Social necessity and social possibility determined when and where the idea of childhood emerged. In late-seventeenth-century Europe, improved hygiene and nutrition allowed most people to live more than 35 years, the average lifespan earlier in the century. The need to condense childhood disappeared. Moreover, late seventeenth-century European societies required better-educated adults to do increasingly complex work. Prolonging childhood made it possible to better train and prepare young people for adult life.

The introduction of compulsory schooling in Canada between 1871 and the 1920s put children in the spotlight. Over time, the educational system began dividing children according to their capabilities and assigning them to grades. The differentiation facilitated the emergence of a new life stage: adolescence (Klein, 1990). Adolescence was similar to

childhood in that it aimed to prepare people for adult responsibilities, but it offered more specialized instruction. The Great Depression of the 1930s crystallized the gap between childhood and adolescence. Economic hardship forced many teenagers to leave high school and take jobs to help support their families, but children in elementary grades were regarded as insufficiently skilled to make it worthwhile to leave school.

In general, the path to adulthood is longer in wealthier and more complex societies. For example, in Canada and other postmodern countries, people usually complete their formal education, enter the labour market, and "settle down" by their early 30s. Compare this to seventeenth-century Europe, when people reached mature adulthood by the age of about 16.

Age Cohort

An **age cohort** is a category of people born in the same range of years.

Age roles are norms and expectations about the behaviour of people in different age cohorts.

As you pass through the life course, you learn new patterns of behaviour that are common to people about the same age as you. Sociologically speaking, a category of people born in the same range of years is called an **age cohort**. For example, all Canadians born between 1980 and 1989 form an age cohort. **Age roles** are patterns of behaviour that we expect of people in different age cohorts. Age roles also form an important part of our sense of self and others (Riley, Foner, and Waring, 1988). As we pass through the stages of the life course, we assume different age roles. To put it simply, a child is supposed to act like a child, an older person like an older person. We may see a 5-year-old dressed in a suit and think it cute but look askance at a lone 50-year-old on a merry-go-round. "Act your age" is a demand that we make when people of any age do not conform to their age roles. Many age roles are informally known by character types, such as "the rebellious teenager" and "the wise old woman." We formalize some age roles by law. For instance, establishing a minimum age for smoking, drinking, driving, and voting formalizes certain aspects of the adolescent and adult roles.

We find it natural that children in the same age cohort, such as preschoolers in a park, should play together or that people of similar age cluster together at parties. Conversely, many people view romance and marriage between people who are widely separated by age to be problematic and even repulsive.

At the same time, no two cohorts have the same experience as they pass through the age structure. As the members of a cohort move through a given range of years, they both change and are changed by their experiences.

Generation

A **generation** is an age cohort that shares unique formative experiences during the first few decades of life, which help to shape a collective identity and set of values.

A **generation** is a special type of age cohort. Many people think of a generation as people born within a 15- to 30-year span. Sociologists, however, usually define a generation more narrowly. From a sociological point of view, a generation comprises members of an age cohort who have unique and formative experiences during their youth. Age cohorts are statistically convenient categories, but members of a generation form a group with a collective identity and shared values.

Not all cohorts can become a generation. Generations are most likely to form during times of rapid social change. When society is in upheaval, young people seeking to find their way in the world can no longer rely on the predictable patterns of the past but must carve out new trails. Revolutionary movements, whether in politics or the arts, are often led by members of a young generation who aggressively displace the ideas of an older generation (Eisenstadt, 1956; Mannheim, 1952).

Because Canadians live longer than ever, six generations are alive today. In describing them, we recognize that generations tend to be clearest at their centre and fuzzier at their boundaries, and that the generalizations we offer below only represent tendencies revealed by North American surveys.

The generation that is currently passing away and whose experiences are increasingly known only through history books is called "the greatest generation." Born between the early 1900s and 1928, members of the latter part of this generation reached the age

of 93 in 2021. They are called the "greatest generation" because they came of age during the Great Depression (1929–39) and then went on to endure World War II (1939–45). By rising to the formidable challenges of these two events, the greatest generation laid the groundwork for economic prosperity and stability in Canada in the decades ahead.

The greatest generation was followed by "the silent generation," born between 1929 and 1945. In 2021, they were between the ages of 76 and 92. The silent generation is sometimes called the "traditionalist generation" because of their shared values of hard work, thriftiness, and conformity. Occasionally, they are referred to as the "lucky generation" because they were old enough to be shaped by the events of World War II but too young to have experienced combat. Craving security, the silent generation is risk-averse, patriotic, and community-minded. As a generation, its chief shortcoming is that it was not especially innovative. Its members often felt threatened by change.

As soldiers returned home after World War II and settled down to family life, Canada experienced a baby boom that lasted until the mid-1960s. During this period, approximately 400 000 children were born each year. In 2021, Baby Boomers were between the ages of 56 and 75. When this cohort came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, they turned the stolid, comfortable world of their parents upside down. Baby Boomers were the leading edge of a cultural revolution that embraced civil rights and opposed war. The songs of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Guess Who—to name a few—served to rally this generation against the establishment. Nonetheless, Baby Boomers were often blind to their own biases. For example, they gave little thought to the sidelining of talented female performers in a male-dominated music industry (Katz, 2020). Praised for being competitive, independent, and innovative, Baby Boomers were also seen as impatient, selfish, and self-absorbed. Reaping the benefits of a steady job market and a strong social safety net, Baby Boomers are now often accused of being out of touch. Many of them seem indifferent to the weaker job prospects and government support that shaped the path to adulthood for subsequent generations (Higgs and Gilleard, 2010; Hoolachan and McKee, 2019).

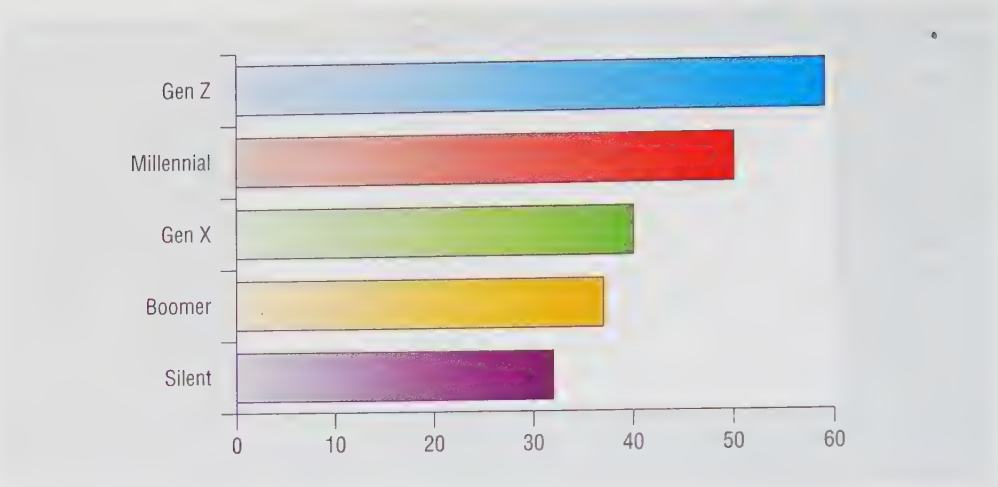
Generation X followed the Baby Boomers, growing up in their shadow (Katz, 2017). Born between 1966 and 1981, they were between 40 and 55 years old in 2021. Commonly known as latchkey children because many of them returned to an empty home after school, they often spent their afternoons watching music videos on MuchMusic, one of the first specialty channels on cable TV, or playing Pong on their Ataris, the first successfully mass-marketed interactive gaming console. Popular television shows promoted idealistic images of happy families such as the Waltons, Cosbys, and Conners, but Generation X grew up at a time of rising divorce rates (Leidl, 2013). They are often described as skeptical, individualistic, pragmatic, and conservative with money.

The Millennials, born between 1982 and 1994, are so named because they were the first generation to come of age in the twenty-first century (Howe and Strauss, 2009). Millennials are often derided as lazy, entitled, and overconfident, but the labels are undeserved. Despite record high attendance in postsecondary education, the Great Recession (2008–09) dashed the career aspirations of many Millennials. Trapped in precarious jobs, many Millennials were forced to put off important milestones, including marriage and homeownership (Clark, 2019; Milkman, 2017).

Today, Millennials are the largest segment in the workforce. Shaped by their earlier experiences in the labour market, Millennials have acquired a reputation for changing jobs quickly and often (AbouAssi, Johnson, and Holt, 2020). Their quest for higher pay and more rewarding work may one day give them the success they crave. Meanwhile, their tendency to decimate established industries and products (cable television, holiday cruises, department stores, ironing, napkins, and postcards to name a few) bewilders older generations (MacKenzie and Scherer, 2019).

Millennials tend to be tolerant, open-minded, and environmentally conscious, have an unshakable faith that they can make a positive difference in their world, and are always on the search for new experiences (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2014; Figure 4.1). They are multitaskers who value teamwork, and they take technological advances such as the Internet for granted. The downside of many members of this generation is that they tend to lack loyalty and have short attention spans.

FIGURE 4.1
Percent of Americans Who Say Forms Should Offer More Options for Gender Than Simply "Male" and "Female", by Generation



Source: Pew Research Center, "Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues," Washington, DC. (2019a)

Members of Generation Z were born between 1995 and 2010. In 2021, they ranged in age from 11 to 26. They tend to have even shorter attention spans and stronger multitasking capabilities than do Millennials. Both generations are almost always connected to the Internet and social media through their smartphones, but differences are evident. Millennials tend to use Facebook, whereas Generation Z prefers Instagram and Snapchat (Seemiller and Grace, 2019). Generation Z also shops differently. Whether it's a favourite meal from a nearby restaurant or a new pair of shoes, online shopping makes it possible for Generation Z to purchase what they need from the comfort of their own homes.

The jury is still out as to how Generation Z will manage adult responsibilities. Some observers suggest that Generation Z is growing up slowly, missing many of the milestones that marked the passage to adulthood in the past (Twenge, 2017). For example, fewer youth today are dating, and fewer have had sexual intercourse, received their driver's licence, or gotten drunk than the youth of previous generations did at their age. They may also be too attached to their smartphones. High social media use is associated with disrupted sleep patterns, lower physical activity and negative social comparison, which may, in turn, be fuelling the rise of anxiety and depression among some members of this generation (Keles, McCrae, and Grealish, 2020).

Time for Review

- In what ways do the number and duration of life stages vary across societies and historical periods?
- What transforms a cohort into a generation?
- What distinguishes Millennials from Generation Z?

How Socialization Works

The **social environment** is composed of others to whom individuals must adapt to satisfy their own needs and interests.

Adaptation is the process of changing our actions to maximize the degree to which an environment satisfies our needs and interests.

Some people are passive, others aggressive. Some are serious, others humorous. Some are selfish, others altruistic. It is instructive to ask how socialization contributes to such wide variation in character type.

A detailed answer to this question is complex, but the basic principles are not: People are surrounded and influenced by others, who constitute a person's **social environment**. To satisfy individual needs and interests, every person needs to adapt to his or her environment. **Adaptation** involves arranging our actions to maximize the degree to which an environment satisfies our needs and interests.

The challenge of learning to ride a bicycle illustrates these concepts. If a girl wants to ride a bicycle, she cannot act any way she likes. To be successful, she must adjust her

behaviour to satisfy the characteristics of the physical environment. In this case, the dominant environmental characteristic is gravity. On her first attempt, the novice cyclist will do her best, but her adaptive behaviour will likely be imperfect. As a result, the environment provides feedback in the form of skinned knees, scraped hands, and bruised legs. These are all signals that the environment is not cooperating. To gain cooperation and satisfy her bike-riding interests, the girl must learn how to balance herself on the bicycle. She does, and eventually learns the role of cyclist.

The same process occurs in social environments, each of which has distinctive requirements. Different types of families make different kinds of demands on their children. Different kinds of schools have distinctive expectations of students. Neighbourhood environments differ, and so do friendship groups and every other social setting. Each of these environments shapes its participants through socialization. In an abusive family, the adaptive strategies that children learn, and the kind of persons they become, differ from what other children learn and become in a warm, supportive family.

As these examples make clear, socialization is fundamentally an evolutionary process. Simply stated, the steps in the process are as follows: (1) In any environment, a person acts on the basis of his or her existing personal characteristics and interests. (2) The environment responds to the person's actions more or less cooperatively. (3) The environmental response shapes the individual's conduct by either reinforcing existing patterns (cooperation) or encouraging change (resistance). In short, individual character leads to actions to which environments respond selectively. When environments respond cooperatively—when they satisfy individual needs—the rewards reinforce existing individual characteristics. When environments frustrate individual needs, change (learning) is encouraged.

When socialization occurs in infants and children, the results are profound because the immediate social environment (typically the family) is so demanding and powerful relative to the child's resources. As children grow older and become more fully socialized, they have a wider range of adaptive options at their disposal. This means their characters are more stable, since they are more skilled at getting environments to cooperate. Still, at all stages of life, dramatic resocialization is possible if the social environment is sufficiently imposing.

Theories and Agents of Socialization

Functionalists, conflict theorists, symbolic interactionists, and feminist theorists interpret socialization differently. Functionalists highlight how socialization helps to maintain orderly social relations while minimizing individual freedom. Conflict and feminist theorists emphasize the discord that occurs during socialization based on class, gender, and other divisions. Symbolic interactionists focus on how individual creativity allows individuals to attach meaning to their social surroundings, thus highlighting how individuals often step outside of, and modify, the values and roles that authorities try to teach them. But socialization—whether it maintains order or engenders conflict, shapes us or allows us to shape it—operates through a variety of social institutions, including families, schools, peer groups, and, in modern times, the mass media. As we consider how these various "agents of socialization" work, pay attention to the functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and feminist interpretations embedded in our discussion.

Families

Primary socialization is the process of mastering the basic skills required to function in society during childhood, such as learning language and our place in the world. Babies come into the world as curious and motivated learners. Most families provide the careful, intimate attention that help babies begin to learn how to feel, think, and act.

Primary socialization is the process of acquiring the basic skills needed to function in society during childhood. Primary socialization usually takes place in a family.

At around 18 months of age, children begin to use gender labels and become aware of their own gender (Martin and Ruble, 2011). Where does this knowledge come from?

ONOKY - Fabrice LEROUGE/Getty Images

As the first major agent of socialization, families help children to learn basic skills and internalize the values of their society.

Parents provide the material and social environment that help children "do" gender. Not only do parents act as role models, they organize play activities and shape their child's learning environment (Dinella and Weisgram, 2018). Parents usually decide to dress children in gender-specific colours and tend to read them books that feature characters in traditionally gendered family roles. Parents generally furnish boys' rooms with sports equipment, toy cars, and action figures while outfitting girls' rooms with kitchen sets, dolls, and dress-up clothes (Leaper and Farkas, 2015; MacPhee and Prendergast, 2019). Children's understanding of **gender roles** grows and becomes more nuanced as they age, but their families play an early and essential role in this regard.

Gender roles are the set of behaviours associated with widely shared expectations about how males and females are supposed to act.

Consider too the long-term effect of the family's religious atmosphere. Research shows that the main way a religious group grows is by recruiting and retaining children whose parents already belong to the group (Bengston, 2013; Bibby, 2001). Parents are the main source of their children's religious identification throughout life. Even Canadians who say they have abandoned the religious faith of their parents—or claim to have no religious identification—typically readopt the religious identity of their parents when they participate in "rites of passage," such as marriage and baptism (Uecker, Mayrl, and Stroope, 2016). In these and many other ways, the family into which a person is born exerts an enduring influence throughout that person's life.

The role of the family in the socialization process is less prominent today than it was a century ago. To maintain an adequate standard of living for the household, women began working outside the home. As a result, the need for child care grew steadily (Sinha, 2014c). In addition, families are less stable and more complex than they were even a few decades ago. Contact with fathers, in particular, has dwindled. Because of these developments, child socialization has become a big social problem.

Schools: Functions and Conflicts

In most provinces and territories, the school year is about 180 days long and instructional time takes up nearly seven hours per day. Children as young as three can attend nursery school, by the age of four they can attend kindergarten, and school attendance is mandatory in all provinces and territories until at least age 16. Thus, schools play a large role in **secondary socialization**, or socialization outside the family after childhood. Instructing students in academic and vocational subjects is just one part of the school's job. In addition, a **hidden curriculum** teaches students how to be "good citizens" following graduation.

Secondary socialization is socialization outside the family after childhood.

The hidden curriculum in school involves teaching obedience to authority and conformity to cultural norms.

What does the hidden curriculum consist of? Families tend to use personal and emotional criteria to evaluate children. In contrast, as students, children are led to believe that they are evaluated only on the basis of test performance and that similar criteria will be used to evaluate them in the work world. The lesson is only partly true. As you will see in Chapters 8 (Social Stratification), 10 (Race and Ethnicity), 11 (Sexualities and Gender Stratification), and 16 (Education), performance alone does not determine success in school and in the work world. Class, gender, sexual orientation, and racial criteria play an important role, too. But the accuracy of the lesson is not the issue. The hidden curriculum has accomplished its goal if students believe they are judged on the basis of performance alone. If a hidden curriculum is successful, students also learn punctuality, respect for authority, and other conformist behaviours and beliefs that are expected of good citizens, conventionally defined.

Conflict theorists, attuned as they are to the ongoing struggle between privileged and disadvantaged groups that occurs beneath the surface of social life, first proposed the idea of the hidden curriculum (Willis, 1984 [1977]). Their research indicates that many students from underprivileged backgrounds struggle with the hidden curriculum. Disproportionate numbers reject it because it is poorly aligned with lessons they have already internalized—that the privileged always end up on top and that conventionally good behaviour will get

them nowhere. Consequently, students from disadvantaged backgrounds often do poorly in school and enter the work world near the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Paradoxically, by resisting the hidden curriculum, underprivileged students help to maintain the privileges and disadvantages of society's overall structure.

Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock

Learning disciplined work habits is an important part of the socialization that takes place in schools.

Symbolic Interactionism and the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Symbolic interactionists proposed the **Thomas theorem** in the early 1900s. It states that "situations we define as real become real in their consequences" (Thomas, 1966 [1931]: 301). They also developed the closely related idea of the **self-fulfilling prophecy**, an expectation that helps to cause what it predicts. The expectations of many working-class and racial-minority students act as self-fulfilling prophecies. Insofar as they expect to achieve little if they play by the rules, such students often reject the rules and therefore achieve little.

Research shows that self-fulfilling prophecies can also affect students through teachers' expectations. More than 50 years ago, a bold experiment demonstrated that when teachers hold high expectations for students, academic performance improves; conversely, when expectations are low, students will underperform (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). Today, a large body of research confirms the relationship between teacher expectations and student performance (Johnston, Wildy, and Shan, 2019; Rubie-Davis, Hattie, and Hamilton, 2006; Timmermans et al., 2018). It follows that if a teacher believes that children from underprivileged backgrounds or children who are members of minority groups will do poorly in school, it increases the chance that they will do poorly.

The **Thomas theorem** states, "Situations we define as real become real in their consequences."

A **self-fulfilling prophecy** is an expectation that helps bring about what it predicts.

Peer Groups

The importance of peer groups as agents of socialization grew in the twentieth century. A **peer group** consists of individuals who are about the same age and of similar status. (**Status** refers to a recognized social position an individual can occupy.) Peer groups perform a variety of functions. They help children and adolescents separate from their families and develop independent sources of identity. They also influence a range of lifestyle issues such as appearance, social activities, and relationships. In fact, the peer group is often a leading socializing agent from middle childhood through adolescence.

Conflict often breaks out between family-supported values and values supported by the adolescent peer group. Young people use peer groups, which are controlled by adolescents themselves, to begin developing their own identities. They do so by rejecting some parental values, experimenting with new elements of culture, and engaging in rebellious behaviour. In contrast, families are controlled by parents and represent the values of childhood. Under these circumstances, conflict between the generations is likely to occur regarding such issues as hair and dress styles; music; curfews; tobacco, drug, and alcohol use; and political views.

However, we must not overemphasize the significance of adolescent-parent conflict. This type of conflict is usually temporary, and once adolescents mature, the family exerts a more lasting influence on many aspects of life. In the long run, families have more influence than peer groups do on the educational ambitions and the political, social, and religious beliefs of adolescents and university students (Crosnoe and Johnson, 2011; Simons-Morton and Chen, 2009).

Another reason not to exaggerate the importance of peer groups as sources of discord is that they help *integrate* young people into the larger society, thus minimizing conflict. For instance, peer groups prepare young people for the class and racial inequalities of the adult

A person's **peer group** comprises people who are about the same age and of similar status as the individual. The peer group acts as an agent of socialization.

Status refers to a recognized social position an individual can occupy.

BOX 4.1 Sociology and the Media

THE SOCIETY

Imagine a community composed only of teenagers aged 16 to 18. Does such a scenario intrigue or frighten you? If your interest is piqued, you might want to watch *The Society*, a hit show on Netflix, with its modern interpretation of *Lord of the Flies*. The trouble begins as students return home from a mysteriously cancelled high school trip. Somehow, everyone in their small privileged town on the east coast has disappeared. What's their response when they learn there are no adults looking over their shoulder? A wild, no-holds barred party, of course!

The next day, reality sets in. They soon discover that the town is hemmed in by an impenetrable forest. Leaving town is not an option and no one has access to the Internet. With only themselves to rely on, the students must figure out what has happened to the townspeople and build a functioning society.

Early on, the teens come to believe they have entered a parallel universe. Those perceptions seem to be reinforced at the end of the first season. In the final scene, a woman reads to a group of young children in the town's library. Behind the woman, viewers see a plaque with the heading "We remember them," followed by a list of all the missing teenagers.

But it is the mayhem that gets most of the attention in the show. Some teens desperately miss their parents. Others, not so much. Without the watchful eyes of adults to suppress their darkest impulses, the sociopaths among the teens unleash anarchy. Murder, rape, violence, and addiction undo efforts to ration food, establish an equitable work rotation, hold mayoral elections, and conduct a fair murder trial after one girl is killed. Even though someone is convicted and then executed for her death, there is uncertainty as to whether he acted alone. What cannot be denied is that no one thinks anymore that it is fun for teenagers to be in charge of themselves.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What would be the advantages of having all members of a society be the same age? What might be the disadvantages?
2. Why does the presence of adults affect how teenagers behave?

world and the gender-specific criteria that are often used to evaluate adults, such as boys' competitiveness and girls' physical attractiveness. In short, peer groups serve two functions: They help adolescents form an independent identity by separating them from their families, and they also teach adolescents how to adapt to the ways of the larger society (see Box 4.1).

The Mass Media

Schools and peer groups have become increasingly important socializing agents in the twenty-first century. So have the mass media, including television, radio, movies, videos, music downloads, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and books.

The fastest-growing mass medium is the Internet. Worldwide, the number of Internet users jumped from just 36 million in 1996 to more than 4.6 billion in 2020 (Internet World Statistics, 2020). This means that more than half the world's population now has access to the Internet.

The Internet has begun to replace television as the medium that Canadians spend the most time using on a daily basis. Subscriptions to cable and satellite TV are rapidly falling, whereas online streaming services are soaring in popularity. Canadians still watch about four hours of television daily on average (Think TV, 2019). However, Millennials now spend less time watching television than they spend on the Internet (see Chapter 17, Mass and Social Media).

At the same time, a profound change in user behaviour has occurred. Canadians multitask. Increasingly, they surf the Internet, chat online, and send texts on their mobile devices while watching TV. Sometimes, they do all these things at the same time. These changing habits force advertisers to find new ways of engaging distracted audiences. By inviting television viewers to access additional content online or to text or tweet their responses directly to the show, boundaries between these different forms of mass media are becoming increasingly blurred.

Canadians increasingly live in a world of continuous connectivity. There are benefits to be sure. Parents can better track their children's whereabouts. We can share pictures of our

vacation while still on vacation. And if you've ever wondered what song was playing on the mall audio system, an app will identify it after just a few phrases and link you to a website where you can buy it.

At the same time, researchers wonder whether continuous connectivity comes at a cost. What does it mean that there is almost no possibility of being truly alone or unavailable? According to Sherry Turkle (2015), continuous connectivity is starving our culture of conversation. As an example, she notes how common it has become for diners at home or in a restaurant to put their cellphones on the table beside them and to check these devices frequently. The habit prevents diners from giving each other their full attention; it encourages superficial interaction. If we do not learn how to see and hear one another through face-to-face conversation, Turkle argues, we compromise our capacity to develop empathy.

Other risks also exist. How does someone take back a comment or a picture that was posted in haste but can be seen immediately by others and re-posted many times over? As Box 4.2 illustrates, these issues are particularly relevant in the case of cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying is the use of electronic communications technology to threaten, harass, embarrass, or socially exclude others.

BOX 4.2 Social Policy

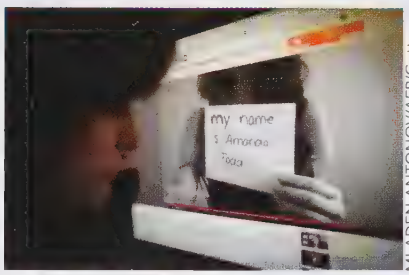
CYBER-BULLYING

Every schoolyard, it seems, has a bully, someone who picks on smaller children by pushing them around and calling them names. Less directly, school bullying also occurs when someone scrawls messages on toilet stalls to ruin a person's reputation. But in the age of the Internet, where instant messaging and social media websites allow for immediate and constant communication, bullying takes on a completely new meaning. The phenomenon has grown so quickly that it has garnered its own label: cyber-bullying. **Cyber-bullying** is the use of electronic communications technology to threaten, harass, embarrass, or socially exclude others.

Approximately one in five Canadians between the ages of 15 and 25 report having been a victim of cyber-bullying in the past five years (Hango, 2016). Cyber-bullying is an increasing concern to a growing number of educators, law enforcement officers, and legislators. Current laws and preventive policies appear to be poorly equipped to deal with the unique aspects of cyber-bullying. Consider, for example, the story of Amanda Todd, a teenage girl who killed herself after sexually explicit photos of her were distributed to her classmates. Her parents were initially unable to convince the authorities to treat cyber-bullying as a crime. However, the attention paid to her case, and others like it, resulted in national ad campaigns to stop cyber-bullying and changes to the law that have criminalized distributing intimate pictures without the consent of the photographed person.

While these measures may have an effect on cyber-bullying, experts point out that cyber-bullying differs from traditional bullying in several respects. Perpetrators of cyber-bullying never have to look their victims in the eye. The sense of anonymity emboldens cyber-bullies to post things they would hesitate to say in person. And because they don't see the pain they inflict, they do not learn to curb their behaviour (Kowalski et al., 2014).

In traditional forms of bullying, it is relatively simple to identify the aggressor and the victim. But this is not the case with cyber-bullying. Victims can just as easily become aggressors themselves. In fact, victims appear to be much more comfortable—and capable—of retaliating to aggressive acts online than they ever would be in person (Law et al., 2012). In addition, traditional forms of bullying have a relatively small audience: those who are bystanders in the playground or who read comments on the bathroom wall. When bullying victims leave school, they are generally able to shed their identity as a victim. In contrast, when messages or pictures are posted online, the audience is potentially huge. No one can control what happens after images or messages are posted online: They are visible in cyberspace in perpetuity (Sticca and Perren, 2013). Consequently, for the victim, no place feels safe.



MLADEN ANTONOV/AFP/Getty Images

Screenshot from a video posted by Amanda Todd in 2012. Four weeks after posting this video, she committed suicide.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Is it important to find ways to control how people communicate with one another over the Internet?
2. Does the criminalization of sharing photos without a person's consent go far enough to punish those who engage in cyber-bullying?

THE MASS MEDIA AND FEMINIST APPROACHES TO SOCIALIZATION

The mass media expose individuals to influences that shape their ideas, attitudes, expectations, values, and behaviour. Although. to a certain extent. people are able to select socialization influences from the mass media, they tend to select influences that are more prevalent, fit current cultural standards, and are made especially appealing by those who control the mass media.

Consider this: Feminist sociologists note an overall trend towards depicting women in more diverse roles. For example, films with a female lead character are becoming more common, even if men still account for two-thirds of all lead characters (Neville and Anastasio, 2019). However, what hasn't changed much is the message of male superiority. One innovative study used specialized computer software to measure the association between gender and high-level cognitive ability in popular English-speaking films during the last 50 years. Analysis of nearly 12 000 films revealed that the pattern of assigning cognitive brilliance to men rather than women did not change (Gálvez, Tiffenberg, and Altszyler, 2019). The trouble is that when movies help to teach girls that they are less intelligent than boys, the chance increases that they will choose non-science careers, perpetuating the underrepresentation of women in science.

Resocialization and Total Institutions

Resocialization occurs when powerful socializing agents deliberately cause rapid change in a person's values, roles, and self-conception, sometimes against a person's will.

Initiation rites are rituals that signify transition from one group to another and ensure loyalty to the new group.

Total institutions are settings in which people are isolated from the larger society and under the strict control and constant supervision of a specialized staff.

It is important to highlight the significance of **resocialization** to the lifelong process of social learning. Resocialization occurs when powerful socializing agents intentionally cause rapid change in people's values, roles, and self-conception, sometimes against their will.

The ceremonies that occur when someone joins a fraternity, a sorority, a sports team, or a religious order are good examples of resocialization. These types of ceremonies, called **initiation rites**, mark an individual's transition from one group to another and help to ensure the new member's loyalty to the group. In initiation rites, new members abandon old self-perceptions and take on new identities. The rites usually consist of a three-stage ceremony: The new member (1) separates from the old status and identity (ritual rejection); (2) experiences degradation, disorientation, and stress (ritual death); and (3) accepts the new group culture and status (ritual rebirth).

Resocialization commonly occurs in what Erving Goffman (1961) called **total institutions**. In total institutions, people are isolated from the larger society and are under the strict control and constant supervision of a specialized staff. In the "pressure cooker" atmosphere of asylums and prisons, resocialization is often rapid and thorough, even without initiation rites. This fact was famously illustrated in an experiment conducted in the 1970s.

In the Stanford prison experiment, researchers created their own mock prison and paid about two dozen male volunteers to act as guards and inmates (Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, 1972, 2008). The American and Canadian volunteers were mature, emotionally stable, intelligent university students from middle-class homes, and none had a criminal record. A coin flip designated each volunteer a prisoner or a guard. The prisoners were picked up by city police officers in a squad car, searched, handcuffed, fingerprinted, booked at the police station, and taken blindfolded to the mock prison. At the mock prison, each prisoner was stripped, deloused, put into a uniform, given a number, and placed in a cell with two other inmates. The guards made up their own rules for maintaining order.

The researchers wanted to observe and record social interaction in the mock prison for two weeks to better understand what it means to be a prisoner or a guard. However, just six days after the experiment began, the researchers, frightened by what they witnessed, shut it down. About one-third of the guards had begun to treat the prisoners like despicable animals, taking pleasure in cruelty. For their part, the prisoners became submissive and dehumanized, thinking primarily about survival, escape, and their growing hatred of the guards. Had they been thinking as university students, they could have walked out of the experiment at any time. Some of the prisoners did, in fact, beg for

parole. However, by the fifth day of the experiment they were so programmed to think of themselves as prisoners that they returned docilely to their cells when their request for parole was denied.

A particularly shameful example of how total institutions function can be found in Canada's treatment of Indigenous people. From the 1870s to 1996, the Canadian government snatched about 150 000 Indigenous children from their families and placed them in residential schools. The primary purpose of the residential school system was to isolate children from the influence of their families, communities, and traditions so that they could be assimilated into the dominant European culture.

In the residential school system, Indigenous children were forced to abandon their cultural practices. Harsh punishment, including beatings and the withholding of food, were meted out to children who attempted to communicate in their own language or to follow their own customs.

The effects of the residential school system are still with us because the institution failed to equip Indigenous children to take on responsible adult roles in the outside world. Without proper role models, Indigenous children who left the school as young adults had no concept of what it meant to be a parent. Not surprisingly, many resorted to what they knew, neglecting and abusing their children in ways that mimicked what had happened to them in the school system. Such patterns, repeated across the generations, have made entire communities vulnerable to devastating social problems. High rates of substance abuse, depression, violence, and suicide in Indigenous communities today are some of the effects caused by the residential school system.

Time for Review

- How does a conflict theorist view socialization?
- How does the hidden curriculum influence successful school performance?
- What is a self-fulfilling prophecy?
- What messages do the mass media send about appropriate roles for men and women?
- Why are total institutions ideal for resocialization?

Socialization and the Flexible Self

The development of the self is a lifelong process. When young adults enter a profession or get married, they must learn new occupational and family roles. Retirement and old age present an entirely new set of challenges. Giving up a job, seeing children leave home and start their own families, and losing a spouse and close friends—all these changes later in life require that people think of themselves in new ways and redefine who they are.

Many new roles are predictable. To help us learn them, we often engage in **anticipatory socialization**, which involves beginning to take on the norms and behaviours of the roles to which we aspire. Other new roles are unpredictable. You might unexpectedly fall in love and marry someone from a different ethnic, racial, or religious group. You might experience a sudden and difficult transition from peace to war. If so, you will have to learn new roles and adopt new cultural values, or at least modify old ones without the benefit of anticipatory socialization. In either case, the self remains flexible in adulthood.

Anticipatory socialization involves taking on the norms and behaviours of a role to which we aspire.

Today, people's identities change faster, more often, and more completely than they did just a few decades ago. One factor contributing to the growing flexibility of the self is globalization. As we saw in Chapter 3, Culture, people are now less obliged to accept the culture into which they are born. Because of globalization, they are freer to combine elements of culture from a wide variety of historical periods and geographical settings.

A second factor increasing our freedom to design our selves is our growing ability to fashion new bodies from old. People have always defined themselves partly in terms of their bodies—your self-conception is influenced by whether you're a man or a woman, tall or short, healthy or ill, conventionally attractive or plain. However, our bodies used to be fixed by nature. People could do nothing to change the fact that they were born with certain features and grew older at a certain rate.

Now, however, you can change your body and, therefore, your self-conception, radically and virtually at will—if, that is, you can afford it. Bodybuilding, aerobic exercise, and weight-reduction regimens are more popular than ever. Plastic surgery allows people to buy new breasts, noses, lips, eyelids, and hair—and to remove unwanted fat, skin, and hair from various parts of their bodies. Other body-altering procedures include sex reassignment surgery and organ transplants. At any given time, more than 50 000 North Americans are waiting for a replacement organ. Brisk, illegal international trade in human hearts, lungs, kidneys, livers, and eyes enables well-to-do people to enhance and extend their lives (Columb, 2017). Modern bionics makes it possible to wire realistic prosthetic limbs into brain circuitry that, with practice, can function almost like the original limbs. Technologies are also being developed that can restore vision and hearing using cameras, microphones, and microscopic electrodes. As these examples illustrate, many exciting opportunities for changing our bodies, and therefore our self-conception, have been introduced in recent decades.

Self-Identity and the Internet

Further complicating the process of identity formation today is the growth of the Internet. In the 1980s and early 1990s, most observers believed that social interaction by means of computer would involve only the exchange of information between individuals. They were wrong. Computer-assisted social interaction can profoundly affect how people think of themselves.

Internet users interact socially by exchanging text, images, and audio via email, instant messaging, smartphone, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, videoconferencing, computer-assisted work groups, online dating services, and so on. Growing use of the Internet implies that the self has become increasingly flexible, and people are freer than ever to shape their selves as they choose. That is because our audiences—everyone from family members to strangers on the other side of the world—continually observe and evaluate what we share. Audience feedback has the power to shape how we think, act, and see ourselves, which in turn influences how we subsequently choose to present ourselves (Rettberg, 2017). Facebook creates an uneditable, algorithm-generated "Year in Review" video for you. Should we welcome or be worried about such efforts to govern how others see us? (Cheney-Lippold, 2017; Gillespie, 2018)?

Time for Review

- In what ways have globalization, medical advances, and the pervasiveness of the Internet led to new, more flexible selves?
- Why must socialization continue into adulthood?

Summary

1. **Why is social interaction necessary to unleash human potential?**
   Studies show that children raised in extreme isolation do not develop normally. They often lack the intellectual and emotional capacity of children raised in conventional environments. Various theories suggest that socialization leads to the formation of self. Freud argued that a self-image begins to emerge when a baby's impulsive demands are denied. Because of many lessons in self-control, a child eventually develops a sense of what constitutes appropriate behaviour, a moral sense of right and wrong, and a personal conscience. Ongoing social interaction is thus necessary for the self to emerge. Like Freud, Mead noted that an impulsive aspect of the self (the "I") is present from birth. Developing Cooley's idea of the "looking-glass self," Mead also argued that a repository of culturally approved standards emerges as part of the self during social interaction. Mead drew attention to the unique human capacity to take the role of the other as the source of the "me." People develop, he wrote, by first imitating and pretending to be their significant others, then learning to play complex games that require understanding several roles simultaneously, and finally developing a sense of cultural standards and how they apply.

2. **How are stages in the life course influenced by the historical period in which people live?**
   The stages of the life course have been structured differently across history. For example, in the past, childhood and adolescence were not recognized as distinct stages, with the consequence that children were expected to live in much the same way that adults did. Accordingly, children entered the labour market as soon as they were able to perform work tasks. A new view of childhood, which emerged a little over a century ago, began to treat children as unsocialized people who needed instruction and training to develop properly. In response, school attendance became mandatory and labour laws prohibited children from working in the paid labour market. In each historical period, then, we can see that socialization prepares individuals to become the people that society needs them to be.

3. **In what ways did the socializing influence of the family decrease in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, while the influence of schools, peer groups, and the mass media increased?**
   Families remain an important and enduring agent of socialization. However, their influence has dwindled as the reach of other institutions and social forces has grown. The transfer of knowledge and skills that, in the past, would have been the primary if not sole responsibility of families increasingly occurs outside of the family system. Thus, what parents teach their children may be offset by what they learn in other settings.

4. **In what sense is the self more flexible than it once was?**
   People's self-conceptions are subject to more flux now than they were even a few decades ago. Cultural globalization, medical advances, and pervasive digital technologies mean that identity change occurs more quickly, more often and more thoroughly than in the past.

5 Social Interaction

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Identify the sociological "building blocks" of social interaction.
- Recognize ways in which social media do and do not affect social interaction.
- Describe how feminist theory highlights the role of emotions in social interaction.
- Explain the importance of power in social interaction.
- Summarize how symbolic interactionism improves our understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication.

The Building Blocks of Interaction

Successfully navigating life requires mastering five dimensions. For most people, the first three dimensions—height, width, and depth—are the easiest to learn. From an early age, we realize that ignoring these aspects of our physical environment results in scrapes and bruises. So we adapt. Without much thinking about it, we learn how to avoid bumping into chairs and falling downstairs by paying attention to the height, width, and depth of the objects around us.

The fourth dimension—time—is more difficult to learn. You might think that a 40-year-old negotiating a deadline for a work-related task would have enough experience to know approximately how long it would take to complete the task and would negotiate accordingly. Unfortunately, many adults haven't developed that skill, which is why essays are too frequently delivered late and the construction of new ships for the Canadian armed forces is a decade behind schedule.

The fifth dimension is *social*; it is the dimension that sociologists study. New entrants into any social scene experience disorientation. Do newlyweds, retirees, novice marathoners, and first-year college and university students really know what they are getting into? For the same reasons that a road map is useful, a map of the *social* space surrounding us is helpful for figuring out where we want to go.

Sociology seeks to understand the social space in which actions unfold. In some respects, this effort parallels the way physicists seek to understand the physical space that surrounds us. Physicists use special terms to characterize the features of physical space and have ideas about how those features are related. Similarly, sociological concepts and principles highlight important characteristics and relationships in social space. This section introduces some of the fundamental sociological building blocks for understanding social space.

The sociological imagination thrives by exploring the linkages between personal experience and the surrounding society. So let's begin with the person. A person is an individual whose uniqueness is captured in his or her personality, which comprises the constellation of traits that reliably define an individual's singularity. In sociology, *character* is a synonym for "person." Just as you are a person, so is every other individual in Introductory Sociology, because each of you has a unique character.

We spend most of our lives connected to other people. They constitute our **social environment**. Social environments are typically organized, which means that the persons in the environment act in an orderly, patterned way. Observe any school classroom, sports arena, place of worship, or shopping centre, and you will see the social order. The order is not perfect but shows patterns of behaviour. On occasion, students might yell at a professor, one fan might throw another off a balcony, gunshots might ring out in a mosque, or a riot might occur in a mall—but such outbursts are not what you typically expect or generally experience. The fact that people are surprised by such events is evidence that an orderly pattern usually prevails.

A person's **social environment** is composed of real or imagined others to whom the person is connected.

Classrooms aren't chaotic because they are organizations. **Organizations** are collectivities characterized by *social structure*. The structure is evident in the fact that individuals in organizations act in patterned ways. Instructors are typically at the front of the classroom and follow the routine of lecturing, illustrating, asking questions, and the like. Students usually sit facing the instructor, listening, taking notes, raising their own questions, and participating in discussions and debate. Organizations are social spaces in which persons find themselves connected to others. Describing this fifth dimension requires identifying

Organizations are collectivities characterized by structure that encourages patterns in individual action.

the components of an organization and their relationships. Information about organizational components and connections constitutes a social map in which you can locate yourself.

Status and Role

A status is a culturally defined position or social location.

Norms are generally accepted ways of doing things.

The locations on a social map of an organization are called statuses. A **status** is a culturally defined position in an organization. Statuses are connected in systematic ways, which gives any organization its structure. The connections between statuses are **norms**, which you learned in Chapter 2 are generally accepted ways of doing things. The reason your classroom is not chaotic, then, is that the individuals assume positions (statuses such as professor or student) that have expectations for the type of conduct that is appropriate and inappropriate (norms). In short, people know their location on a social map and typically follow specified routes.

Note that statuses and norms are defined by culture. Different cultures invent different kinds of statuses and associated expectations for action. Some cultures encourage democratic governments, others demand authoritarian ones. Some underwrite nuclear families, others embrace extended ones. In this sense, culture is a blueprint for social organization. Note also that people *occupy* statuses but a person is not a status. You are not reducible to the status of a student, a lover, a son, or a daughter. You are a unique human being. Finally, note that organizations exist independently of individuals. If you withdraw from Introductory Sociology, the class endures. If your instructor leaves, a replacement will be found. The organizational pattern persists.

People bring statuses to life. The intersection of the person and the position, the character and the status, are where an individual and society meet. The study of this intersection uses what Mills called the "sociological imagination" (see Chapter 1). There are two basic ways a person can come to occupy a position: through ascription and through achievement.

An ascribed status is a social position imposed on a person at birth. It is related to a characteristic that is impossible or extremely difficult to change.

An **ascribed status** is a social position imposed on a person at birth. It is related to a characteristic that is impossible or extremely difficult to change. Race, sex, age, and country of origin are examples of ascribed statuses. Because of their imposition and tendency to permanence, ascribed statuses are a common source of discrimination and oppression, as later chapters will demonstrate. In contrast, an **achieved status** is a social position that a person acquires through his or her effort; it results from the choices a person makes. Marital status, educational attainment, and occupation are examples of achieved statuses.

An achieved status is a social position that a person acquires through his or her efforts and choices.

Roles are clusters of expectations about thoughts, feelings, and actions appropriate for occupants of a particular status.

Associated with any status are norms about how people should think, feel, and act when they occupy a given social position. These status-related clusters of norms form **roles**, which occupants are expected to perform. For instance, what does it mean to perform the role of "man?" In most countries, norms of traditional masculinity require men and boys to hide emotions that betray the image that they are assertive, confident, and powerful, no matter how strongly they might feel otherwise (Kimmel, 2018). A recent survey shows that around one-third of men would be afraid to ever discuss their mental health because of fears that exposing their vulnerability might negatively affect their career (Movember Canada, 2019).

Statuses differ in the degree to which they constrain a person. That is, people are more committed to the roles associated with some statuses than others. For instance, a person may be an enthusiastic lawyer but an uncommitted parent, or vice versa.

A master status is a social position that a person considers central to his, her, or their social identity.

Master status denotes a social position that a person considers central to his, her, or their social identity. In a master status, the person identifies strongly with the status; the closer the identification, the more central the status and its associated roles and norms are to understanding a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions. "Marvelous" Marvin Hagler was a middle-weight boxing champion. Once asked how important boxing was to him, he replied: "If they cut my bald head open, they will find one big boxing glove. That's all I am. I live it" (quoted in Krystal, 1989). Now *that's* commitment to a master status!

In role performance, we see both the freedom and the constraint that is always present in social life. Constraint occurs in the form of role-playing. If someone performs a role in exactly the way social convention prescribes, it is an act of conformity. Sociologists call

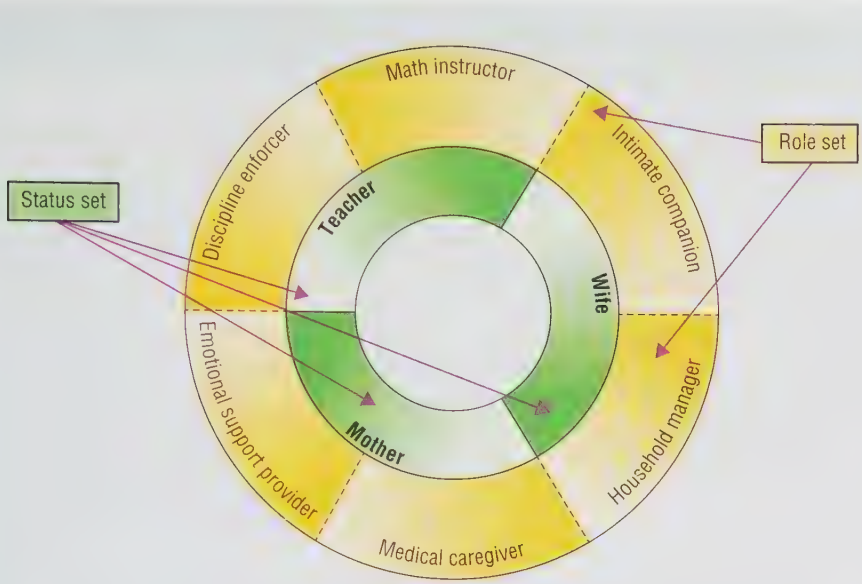


FIGURE 5.1

Role Set and Status Set. People can occupy several statuses at the same time, such as mother, wife, and teacher, as shown in this figure. When considered together, these statuses form a status set. Similarly, role sets are made up of all the roles (expected behaviours) for each status. For example, the expected behaviours associated with the status of wife include being an intimate companion and assuming certain responsibilities as a manager of the household. In this figure, dashed straight lines are used to separate roles, while solid straight lines are used to separate statuses.

such conformity **role-playing**. When military officers issue orders, they expect their orders to be obeyed precisely. However, in many circumstances, role expectations are unclear, incomplete, or contradictory (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). How should you act on a first date? Or when you come across a serious traffic accident? Or when your best friend asks you to lie? In other circumstances, a person's character may prohibit him, her, or them from conforming to clear role expectations. Vegans refuse to eat Thanksgiving turkey at grandmother's house. Teenagers refuse to rat on their friends when the principal asks who vandalized the gym. In these situations, persons engage in role-making. **Role-making** is the creative process by which people generate and perform roles. Through role-making, people display their individuality and autonomy.

Role-playing involves conforming to existing performance expectations.

Role-making is the creative process by which individuals generate role expectations and performances.

Social interaction, the process by which role performers act in relation to others, is thus an ongoing mixture of role-making and role-taking. In all social contexts, people are, to varying degrees, governed by the dictates of the surrounding social structures and agents who shape their own actions (see Figure 5.2). In addition, the *medium* of communication—notably, whether communication is face-to-face or mediated by technology—influences how we interact and the consequences of our interaction. That is a subject to which we now turn.

Social interaction is the process by which role performers act in relation to others.

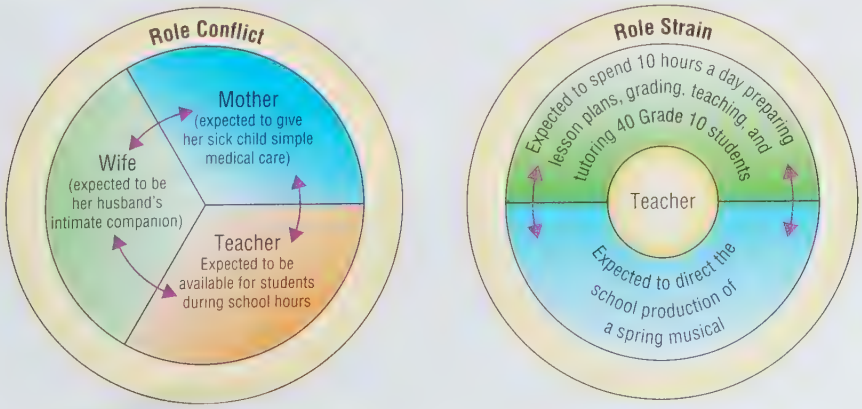

Role Conflict
Mother
(expected to give her sick child simple medical care)
Wife
(expected to be her husband's intimate companion)
Teacher
Expected to be available for students during school hours
Role Strain
Expected to spend 10 hours a day preparing lesson plans, grading, teaching, and tutoring 40 Grade 10 students
Teacher
Expected to direct the school production of a spring musical

FIGURE 5.2

Role Conflict and Role Strain. Role conflict: When a person holds two or more statuses with different role demands, the result is role conflict. How might a woman occupying the three statuses outlined in this figure experience role conflict? Role strain: When a person holds a single status with incompatible role demands, the result is role strain.

Time for Review

- What is the difference between a person, a role, and a status?
- How does role-playing differ from role-making? How are these concepts connected to the ideas of freedom and constraint?

Instrumental communication involves sending messages that are a means to an end.

Expressive communication involves sending messages that are ends in themselves.

Mediated interaction refers to communication that uses technologies to send and receive messages.

Mediated Interaction

Interaction is about communication, the sending and receiving of messages, either instrumental or expressive. **Instrumental communication** involves sending messages that are a means to an end. When a student raises her hand in class and asks a question, it is instrumental; she is asking her question with the purpose of getting a clear answer. **Expressive communication** involves sending messages that are ends in themselves. The student who pumps his arm and shouts "Yes!" after receiving a top grade on his term paper is communicating expressively. The act is its own end; it expresses the relief and joy of excellent performance.

Everyone knows from frustrating experience that the intended message communicated through interaction is often imperfectly aligned with the message received. Messages get lost, garbled, or transformed in the interaction process. The professor misunderstands the student's question and rambles on about some irrelevant issue. The student's triumphant "Yes!" is interpreted as arrogance by peers.

In short, interaction is a messy business fraught with all manner of challenges to clear communication. One challenge relates to the medium employed in interaction. As Marshall McLuhan reminded us more than half a century ago, "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964). The means of communication affects message transmission.

The most direct form of interaction is face to face. For much of human history, it was the only form. However, over time we found other ways of communicating. Think of what the postal and telegraph services did for communicating with those not present in space or time. These new forms of interaction were mediated by innovative technologies, from which they derive their label: **mediated interaction**.

All means of communication vary along several dimensions (Baym, 2015a). Face-to-face interactions are synchronous, rich with social cues, difficult to save and replicate, have narrow reach, and take place over a small distance. Web-based communication, including communication via social media, may be synchronous or nonsynchronous, is generally poorly endowed with social cues, is easily saved and replicated, has narrow or wide reach, and may take place over a long distance.

Gijsbert van der Wal

Many older adults view new technologies as the ruin of young people. Thus, in 2015, this photo of children visiting the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam went viral. Sitting with their backs to Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, the children were huddled over their cellphones, apparently oblivious to the masterpiece behind them. Adults seeing the picture were despondent. "A perfect metaphor for our age," "a sad picture of our society," and "the end of civilization," they commented on the Web (Picardo, 2016). It turns out the children were viewing museum literature on the life of Rembrandt and the history of his painting—and they were sharing what they found.

Mediated interaction technologies have initiated much debate about their effects on social life. Some observers argue that "smart" technologies are reducing our capacity for attention and memory, making us less intelligent, contributing to loneliness, and lowering trust and privacy (Carr, 2011, 2014; Keen, 2015). Other analysts counter that mediated interaction technologies do not have uniformly negative effects. What is more, they provide inexpensive access to knowledge and make social life safer and more interesting (Weinberger, 2014).

The speed of technological innovation and adoption guarantees that debate about changing communication forms will not end soon. However, a sociological observation is worthwhile as you follow these debates. Individuals are constrained *and* free. Many fears about the effects of new forms of mediated interaction are framed as **technological determinism**, where the existence of new technologies *inevitably* leads to undesirable effects. This view downplays the role of choice. Individuals are not required to consult their phones at the dinner table or break up with a loved one via Facebook. The consequences of using a particular technology do not inhere in the technologies; they emerge from how we decide to

use them. This point will become clearer if we consider research on how social media affect empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings and needs of others.

Technological determinism asserts that the adoption of technologies leads to inevitable and sometimes undesirable effects.

How Social Media Affect Empathy

In 2003, the first smartphone—the BlackBerry—was introduced. It was followed in quick succession by the founding of Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), and Twitter (2006), and the introduction of the iPhone (2007). Alongside these technological marvels, the idea grew that the rise of social media was causing a decline in empathy and other maladies.

Two factors were held chiefly responsible for the decline in empathy. First, while face-to-face communication exposes people to the full range of human emotion, social media do away with the frowns, winks, raised eyebrows, chuckles, and shrugs that add nuance to social interaction. From this point of view, social media form an emotionally impoverished medium of communication that is more likely to result in misunderstanding and disagreement than face-to-face interaction is.

The second reason why social media presumably kill empathy is that they involve remote and often anonymous communication. Starkly put, it is riskier to yell at someone standing beside you than at someone a province or a continent away. And if you can't even be identified, you are more likely to behave aggressively and develop extreme views because such behaviour involves fewer costs than if you were identifiable.

When sociologists started investigating the theory that social media cause a decline in empathy, they first looked for supporting evidence. Dozens of studies show that in the twenty-first century, North American undergraduates have become less concerned about the misfortunes of others and less able to imagine other people's viewpoints (Twenge, 2014). Then, probing further, researchers unearthed a more complex reality. They realized that factors other than social media use might be responsible for the observed decline in empathy. A growing proportion of undergraduates come from single-child families where they were used to being the centre of attention or from dual-income families where parents had relatively little time to model and reinforce empathy. A large proportion of undergraduates went to schools that had a "no fail" policy and received little feedback correcting their errors. Many found themselves in colleges, universities, and jobs where intense competition was required to succeed. None of these factors has anything to do with social media use, and they all contribute to declining empathy.

Additional research confirmed that exposure via social media to aggressive content and nasty people decreases our capacity for empathy. However, researchers also found that engaging in prosocial acts—checking to see what a friend is up to, sharing photos with family, playing cooperative video games, and the like—tends to make one *more* empathic (Ogan, 2017; Vossen and Valkenburg, 2016). Interacting on social media can even increase empathy and viciousness simultaneously (see Box 5.1).

In short, research finds that social media affect empathy, but the direction of the effect depends on how people choose to use social media. Like all new technologies, social media create novel opportunities for different courses of action. But role-making makes it possible for people, not technology, to decide the nature of their social interaction.

Time for Review

- What is the difference between instrumental and expressive communication?
- What does research tell us about the effect of "smart" technologies on empathy?

BOX 5.1 Sociology and the Media

HOW CELEBRITIES GENERATE FAN EMPATHY AND CREATE VICIOUS SUPERFANS

Much like ordinary people interacting in everyday life, celebrities compete with each other for attention (van Krieken, 2018). The more attention they and their publicity teams generate on social media, the bigger their audience, the more prestige they enjoy, and the more money they earn.

How do celebrities cultivate attention? The key lies in their willingness to disclose the intimate details of their lives, allowing fans to feel like trusted confidantes. For instance, Ariana Grande has tweeted details about her upset over the suicide bombing at her 2017 concert in Manchester, England; her 2018 breakup with comedian Pete Davidson; her anguish over the overdose death of her ex-boyfriend Mac Miller that same year; and other personal issues. By disclosing such intimate details about her life, Grande enables fans to empathize so deeply with her that some of them are prepared to viciously attack anyone who appears to add to her pain (Rojek, 2016). Thus, in 2019, when Toronto blogger Rosylyn Taluson called Ariana Grande a "spoiled white girl . . . who pays people to write her music," she wasn't prepared for the backlash, including Instagram posts wishing that both she and her children would be murdered (Krishnan, 2019). As this example shows, while social media can facilitate empathy or aggression, it can also facilitate sympathy *and* aggression. It turns out that social interaction in the world of social media is no less complex than social interaction in the "real" world.

lev radin/Shutterstock

Ariana Grande, 2018.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Could the aggressive behaviour of superfans against critics of their celebrity idols be constrained? If so, how?
2. Why have celebrities not asked their superfans to refrain from aggressively defending them against critics?

Feminist Theory and Emotions

You may not yet be convinced that social interaction is structured by norms, statuses, roles, and media of communication. If so, feminist-inspired research in the sociology of emotions is likely to help you appreciate the degree to which interaction is socially structured.

Consider a study in which researchers listened in on conversations between sets of two people who were laughing in public places, such as shopping malls (Provine, 2000). The researchers took note when they heard someone laughing during the conversation and recorded who laughed (the speaker, the listener, or both) and the gender of each person involved.

Their findings indicated a clear status-related pattern governing laughter in everyday conversations: Women laugh more than men do. In fact, they laugh more than twice as often as men do when the speaker is a woman and the listener is a man. However, even when the speaker is a man and the listener is a woman, women are more likely to laugh than men are.

Some people might think these findings confirm the stereotype of the giggling female. Others might say that when it comes to men, women have a lot more to laugh at. However, sociological research suggests that, in general, differences in role performance are often related to gender status.

For example, men are less likely to ask for assistance when doing so would reduce their authority, and they are more likely to engage in long monologues and interrupt when others are talking (Speer and Stokoe, 2011). These differences can often lead to male–female conflict. A stereotypical example is that of the lost male driver and the helpful female passenger. When women passengers see that the male driver is lost, they are likely

to suggest stopping and asking for directions. In contrast, male drivers are less likely to ask for assistance with directions to avoid looking incompetent. If the driver and passenger stick to their roles, the result is often an argument.

Feminist sociologists are particularly aware of gender differences in social interaction such as the ones just described. They recognize that a person eliciting laughter *earns* attention while a person laughing *pays* attention. In this social exchange of a valued thing, namely attention, people with higher status, typically men, generally get more laughs, while people with lower status, typically women, laugh more. This may be why boys are usually the class clowns in school. It seems that laughter is not as spontaneous as you may have thought, and often indicates who has higher or lower status. In other words, social structure influences who gets the laughs and who laughs more often.

Blaj Gabriel/Shutterstock

How is laughing associated with status?

Emotion Management

According to some researchers, laughter and other emotions are like the common cold in that they are an involuntary reaction to an external disturbance. For example, just as people get sick as a result of being exposed to a virus, they respond with fear to an external disturbance such as a grizzly bear attack. In either case, some scholars believe that people can't control what happens to them (Thoits, 1989: 319).

In contrast, feminist sociologists were the first to develop the idea that emotional responses are not involuntary and don't just happen to us: We manage them (Hochschild, 1979, 2012 [1983]). They came to this conclusion as a result of observing that women, as status subordinates, must *control* their emotions more often than men must.

Figure 5.3 shows how you might manage your emotions in response to an external event. If a grizzly bear attacks you in the woods, you can run away as fast as possible, or you can calm yourself and lie down, play dead, and hope for the best. By managing your emotions and following the second strategy, you are more likely to survive the grizzly bear attack. By controlling your fear, you elicit a new emotion: hope.

Managing emotions involves following culturally transmitted "scripts" like those in our imaginary grizzly bear attack. These scripts consist of information that individuals have learned about how to respond to a particular situation. In other words, when individuals experience an external stimulus, they try to follow the culturally designated emotional response to that stimulus. If they are unable to respond in the culturally appropriate manner, individuals often feel guilt, disappointment, or even worse (as in the case of the grizzly bear attack).

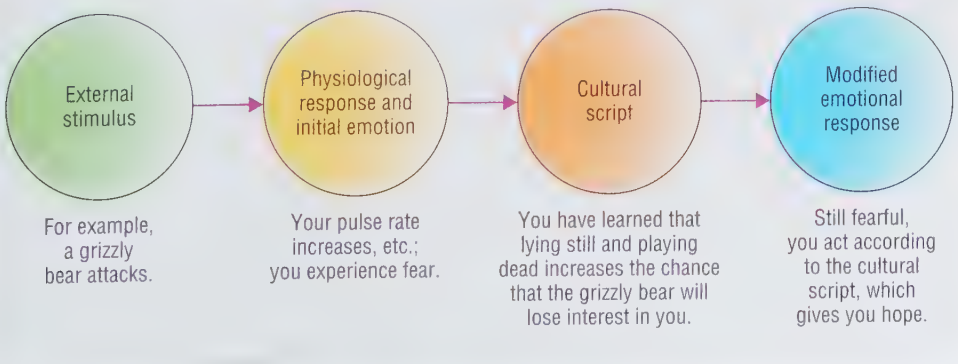

External stimulus
Physiological response and initial emotion
Cultural script
Modified emotional response
For example, a grizzly bear attacks.
Your pulse rate increases, etc.; you experience fear.
You have learned that lying still and playing dead increases the chance that the grizzly bear will lose interest in you.
Still fearful, you act according to the cultural script, which gives you hope.

FIGURE 5.3
How We Get Emotional

Source: Robert Bryn

Emotion management involves people obeying "feeling rules" and responding appropriately to the situations in which they find themselves.

Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild, a leading figure in the field, coined the term **emotion management**. Emotion management refers to people obeying "feeling rules" and responding appropriately to the situations in which they find themselves (Hochschild, 2012 [1983]). For example, people may talk about the "right" to feel angry, or they may believe that they "should" mourn a person's death in a certain way. Although it is evident that individuals have conventional expectations about what they *should* feel, they also have expectations about a variety of other aspects of a situation, such as *how much* they should feel, *how long* they should feel it, and *with whom* they should share those feelings.

These conventions can also change over time. Canadians today consider it normal to mourn the end of a love relationship by shedding tears. However, in the early nineteenth century, some European Romantics considered it normal to shoot themselves in response to such an event—definitely not normal by today's standards. Similarly, if late one afternoon A breaks up with B after an untroubled 10-year love relationship, most people would consider it odd if B started dating someone new that very evening. As these examples suggest, norms govern emotional life.

Emotion Labour

Emotion labour is emotion management that many people do as part of their job and for which they are paid.

Hochschild distinguishes emotion management from **emotion labour**. While everyone manages their emotions according to cultural scripts in everyday life, many people are paid to do emotion labour as part of their job. For example, teachers practise emotion labour when they discipline students who consistently hand in their assignments late, pass notes and talk to others during class, and act as class clowns. Similarly, if much of your job involves dealing with angry and rude customers, misbehaving people, and individuals who make unreasonable demands, you must become an expert in emotion labour. Examples of these types of jobs include sales clerk, nurse, and flight attendant.

Individuals in these types of jobs also spend a considerable part of their workday conducting promotional and public relations work on behalf of their employers. For example, consider how often flight attendants welcome and thank passengers on behalf of the company ("We hope you enjoyed your flight on Air Canada and that we can serve you again the next time you travel"). These tasks require individuals to carefully manage their own emotions while making every effort to keep their customers happy and orderly. In general, more women than men are likely to do emotion labour, perhaps because they are more often socialized to take on caring and nurturing roles. In the late 1980s, Hochschild estimated that, in North America, nearly half the jobs women did and one-fifth of the jobs men did involved substantial amounts of emotion labour.

Significantly, the need for emotion labour is growing as the economy continues to move from mainly producing goods to mainly producing services. An increasing number of people are being hired, trained, and paid for their skills in emotion labour, with employers assessing job applicants for their "emotional intelligence" in addition to their other skills (Sun, 2016). As a result, business organizations are increasingly controlling how feelings are expressed at work, with emotional expression becoming less spontaneous and authentic over time. Since women do more emotion labour than men do, this process affects women more than it does men.

As always, however, conduct in social settings is not fully governed by social expectations. To a degree, occupants of social statuses shape and manage their experience. Consider the way supermarket clerks perform customer service. Research shows that clerks give two reasons for managing their emotions at the customer checkout (Tolich, 1993). The first involves constraint: Because store management insists on politeness and helpfulness, it monitors and regulates emotion labour, taking disciplinary action when clerks consistently and seriously violate emotion norms.

The second reason centres on autonomy: Clerks manage their emotions to have fun to make the routine more bearable. According to one checkout clerk, "I am constantly talking, telling jokes, and stuff. I get a little circus going in my unit" (quoted in Tolich, 1993: 375). Regulated emotion management fosters alienation because others shape it, but autonomous

emotion management is liberating to the degree it allows actors to control their displays of emotion (Quinones et al., 2016).

And so we see that, just as mortar is used to hold stones together to create a retaining wall, norms, roles, statuses, and media of communication need a sort of "social cement" to create a social structure preventing them from falling apart. But what kind of cement binds the building blocks of social life? Said differently, how is social interaction maintained? How are social structures, and society as a whole, possible? The next two sections of this chapter explore these questions.

Time for Review

- In what sense are emotions neither voluntary nor "natural"?
- What is the difference between emotion management and emotion labour?

Conflict Theories of Social Interaction

Competing for Attention

You have probably participated in a conversation where you couldn't get a word in edgewise. As the conversation continues, you begin to feel more and more neglected. You may make stronger and stronger attempts to steer the conversation in your direction. However, if you fail, you may decide to end the interaction altogether. If this type of conversation reoccurs with the same person, you will likely try to avoid starting conversations with him in the future. Recurring interaction usually requires that both parties' need for attention be met.

In general, most people take turns talking in a conversation. Taking turns is a basic conversational norm. Nonetheless, a surprisingly large part of all conversations involves a subtle competition for attention. Consider the following bit of conversation:

> John: "I'm feeling really starved."
>
> Mary: "Oh, I just ate."
>
> John: "Well, I'm feeling really starved."
>
> Mary: "When was the last time you ate?"

Charles Derber recorded this conversation (Derber, 1979: 24). John starts by saying how hungry he is, focusing attention on him. Mary replies that she is not hungry, shifting attention to her. John repeats that he is hungry, shifting attention back to him. Mary finally allows the conversation to focus on John by asking him when he last ate. John thus "wins" the competition for attention.

To explore conversational patterns, Derber recorded 1500 conversations in a variety of locations, such as homes, workplaces, restaurants, classrooms, dormitories, and therapy groups. His conclusion? North Americans usually attempt to focus conversations on themselves, and they usually do so in ways that go unnoticed. Yet in a typical conversation, the participants secretly compete for attention. In Derber's words (1979: 23), there exists

> a set of extremely common conversational practices which show an unresponsiveness to others' topics and involve turning them into one's own. Because of norms prohibiting blatantly egocentric behaviour, these practices are often exquisitely subtle. . . . Although conversationalists are free to introduce topics about themselves, they are expected to maintain an appearance of genuine interest in [topics] about others in a conversation. A delicate face-saving system requires that people refrain from openly disregarding others' concerns and keep expressions of disinterest from becoming visible.

Derber's analysis is influenced by conflict theory. According to conflict theory, competition for attention, approval, prestige, information, money, and other resources are what guide social interaction. As a result, conflict theorists believe that competitive interaction involves people trying to gain the most socially, emotionally, and economically, while paying the least.

Power and Social Interaction

Power is the capacity to carry out one's will despite resistance.

Many conflict theorists of social interaction emphasize that when people interact, their statuses are often arranged in a hierarchy. People on top enjoy more **power** than those on the bottom—that is, they are "in a position to carry out [their] own will despite resistance" (Weber, 1947: 152). In face-to-face communication, the degree of inequality strongly affects the character of social interaction between interacting parties (Stets and Turner, 2014; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). For example, research shows that rich people tend to care less about less fortunate others than do people who are not rich. Unless rich people are interacting with other rich people, they often turn a blind eye, give others the cold shoulder, look down on others, or look right through them. On average, people who are not rich tend to treat others with greater care, respect, and empathy (Kraus and Keltner, 2009). Finnish and American researchers have found similar patterns in their studies of drivers. All else the same, drivers of expensive cars are especially likely to be argumentative, stubborn, and disagreeable. They are therefore less likely to stop and allow pedestrians to cross the road. The likelihood they'll slow down falls 3 percent for every extra US$1000 their vehicle is worth (Courtney et al., 2020; Lönnqvist, Ilmarinen, and Leikas: 2019).

Domination is a mode of interaction in which nearly all power is concentrated in the hands of people of high status. Fear is the dominant emotion in systems of interaction based on domination.

To get a better grasp on the role of power in social interaction, consider two extreme cases and the case that lies at the midpoint between the extremes (Table 5.1). **Domination** represents one extreme type of interaction. In social interaction based on domination, nearly all power is concentrated in the hands of people of high status, whereas people of low status enjoy almost no power. Two examples of social interaction based on domination are guards versus inmates in a concentration camp, and landowners versus slaves on plantations in the US South before the Civil War. In extreme cases of domination, subordinates live in a state of near-constant fear.

REUTERS/Lucas Jackson

Research shows that rich people tend to care less about less fortunate others than do people who are not rich.

TABLE 5.1
Main Modes of Interaction

	Mode of Interaction		
Attribute	**Domination**	**Competition**	**Cooperation**
Level of inequality	High	Medium	Low
Characteristic emotion	Fear	Envy	Trust
Efficiency	Low	Medium	High

The other extreme involves interaction based on **cooperation**. Here, power is more or less equally distributed between people of different status. Cooperative interaction is based on feelings of trust. For instance, marriages are happier when spouses equitably share housework and child care. Perceived inequity breeds resentment and dissatisfaction. It harms intimacy. It increases the chance that people will have extramarital affairs and divorce. In contrast, a high level of trust between spouses is associated with marital stability and enduring love (Khalifian and Barry, 2016; Shallcross and Simpson, 2012).

Cooperation is a basis for social interaction in which power is more or less equally distributed between people of different status. The dominant emotion in cooperative interaction is trust.

Between the two extremes of interaction based on domination and interaction based on cooperation is interaction based on **competition**. In this mode of interaction, power is unequally distributed but the degree of inequality is less than in systems of domination. If trust is the prototypical emotion of relationships based on cooperation, and fear is the characteristic emotion of subordinates involved in relationships based on domination, envy is an important emotion in competitive interaction.

Competition is a mode of interaction in which power is unequally distributed but the degree of inequality is less than in systems of domination. Envy is an important emotion in competitive interactions.

Significantly, an organization's mode of interaction strongly influences its efficiency or productivity—that is, its ability to achieve its goals at the least possible cost. Thus, Black slaves on plantations in the pre-Civil War South and Jews in Nazi concentration camps were usually regarded by their masters as slow and inept workers (Collins, 1982: 66–69). This characterization was not just a matter of prejudice. Slavery is inefficient because, in the final analysis, fear of coercion is the only motivation for slaves to work. Yet as psychologists have known for many decades, punishment is a far less effective motivator than reward is (Skinner, 1953). Slaves hate the tedious and often back-breaking labour; they get little in exchange for it, and therefore they typically work with less than maximum effort.

In a competitive mode of interaction, subordinates receive more benefits, including prestige and money. Prestige and money are stronger motivators than the threat of coercion is. Thus, if bosses pay workers reasonably well and treat them with respect, they will work more efficiently than slaves will, even if the workers do not particularly enjoy their work or fail to identify with the goals of the company. Knowing they can make more money by working harder and that their efforts are appreciated, workers will often put in extra effort (Collins, 1982: 63–65).

However, as sociologist Randall Collins and others have shown, the most efficient workers are those who enjoy their work and identify with their employer (Collins, 1982: 60–85; Krahn, Hughes, and Lowe, 2015). Employers can help to create high worker morale and foster a more cooperative work environment by giving workers a bigger say in decision making, encouraging worker creativity, and ensuring that salaries and perks are not too highly skewed in favour of those on top. Activities that help workers feel they are in harmony with their employer and are playing on the same team include company picnics, baseball games, and, in Japan, the singing of company songs before the workday begins. Similarly, although sales meetings and other conferences have an instrumental purpose (the discussion of sales strategies, new products, and so on), they also offer opportunities for friendly social interaction that increases workers' identification with their employer. When workers identify strongly with their employers, they will be willing to undergo self-sacrifice,

take initiative, and give their best creative effort, even without the prospect of increased material gain.

Power and Position

Power is exercised in all modes of interaction. It is not simply a reflection of personality but is mostly a product of social circumstances. Power is embedded in the statuses that people occupy and in the relationships they form. We can better understand this point by exploring the connection between power and social status.

Social statuses are typically ranked in terms of access to valuable financial, physical, social, or cultural resources. Occupants of preferred statuses have access to many valuable resources and use them to perpetuate privilege. For instance, rich people have the means to hire accountants, tax lawyers, and investment counsellors who can advise them on how to minimize their tax bills and maximize the amount of money they can pass on to their children. Similarly, people in positions of great power can make and enforce norms that benefit them. That is why lower status perpetrators of "street crimes" typically receive more severe punishments than do higher status agents of "suite crime." Such differences are built into the architecture of society.

Power, then, is a principal determinant of successful action. Unequal power is part of the way that people (mainly powerful people) design organizations. Taken together, these considerations highlight that some people are more successful than others are, not because of their intelligence, hard work, thriftiness, and so on, but by virtue of the statuses they occupy, which they may have inherited. You might ask why this state of affairs is tolerated. Why don't the powerless routinely protest? One important reason relates to our "cultural scaffolding."

Cultural scaffolding is the set of cultural values and beliefs that legitimate existing power arrangements, making them seem reasonable and giving them a natural, taken-for-granted quality (Roscigno, 2012). Take language use. No students arrive at university without having had their written and spoken language constantly corrected over an extended period. You spent considerable time and energy memorizing standard spellings and distinguishing which words are correct in specific circumstances (can/may; effect/affect).

You didn't refuse to learn these things because of the cultural scaffolding surrounding you. The pressure to learn standard English is like a conspiracy; the pressure is on wherever you turn—from parents, teachers in every grade, extended family members, and outsiders. Almost everyone takes for granted that standard English is the correct way to express themselves. But where do these rules and regulations come from? Here's a clue. In elementary school, we are taught what is sometimes called "the Queen's English." As this expression suggests, culturally prescribed language rules legitimate and institutionalize the conduct of the rich and the powerful. The rich and the powerful are privileged in all social institutions. Micro-social conduct is played out in a context where the rules of the game are often biased. The pornography industry is a case in point (see Box 5.2, Social Policy: Online Porn, Sexbots, and Power).

Time for Review

- Conflict theorists view interaction as a competition for valued resources. Explain how this principle applies to ordinary conversation.
- What are the main characteristics of domination? How do they differ from the main characteristics of competition and cooperation?
- What signs tell you that a person is powerful?
- What role does cultural scaffolding play in the perpetuation of privilege?

BOX 5.2 Social Policy

ONLINE PORN, SEXBOTS, AND POWER

Gabe Ginsberg/WireImage/Getty Images

Meet Harmony. Male sexbots with bionic penises are next.

Pornhub was founded in Montreal in 2007 and is now the world's 49th most popular website. It offers videos in 10 languages, and viewers average nearly 10 minutes per visit (Alexa, 2020). Pornhub's annual statistical report notes a surge in the popularity of point-of-view (POV) videos, which involve one or more participants wearing a GoPro camera so viewers are "getting everything they need without real world troubles. Who needs an IRL [in real life] partner when you have POV Pornhub videos at your side?" (Pornhub Insights, 2019).

For men wanting a more tangible experience, female sexbots are now available. In 2018, Realbotix released Harmony, the first anatomically correct robotic sex doll equipped with artificial intelligence (AI). Custom models retail for as much as US$17 000. Harmony can talk, move her neck, jaw, mouth, eyes, and other body parts, and she can remember the sounds and facial expressions that her user prefers during intercourse. "We have plans to have 15 layers of AI, one layer adding more advances to the previous one," says the artificial intelligence and content director of Realbotix. "We are currently on the fourth level" (quoted in Crist, 2018).

Proponents of online porn and sexbots argue that people have the right to privacy; the use of online porn and sexbots causes no harm; and it makes some people less lonely, more sexually satisfied, and therefore happier. Opponents reply that online porn and sexbots reinforce the objectification of women and are therefore harmful. They reinforce male-female power dynamics in which men control sex and women are not allowed to say no (Campaign Against Sex Robots, 2018).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do online porn and sexbots make people freer or less free? Which people?
2. Should online porn and sexbots be permitted, regulated, or banned? If regulated, who should do the regulating?

A Highly inappropriate "ad" for Pornhub ...

Symbolic Interaction

Although conflict theorists emphasize how social interaction is guided by competition and a conflict-filled struggle for valued resources, it is clear that this is not always the case. People often behave in ways they consider fair or just, even if they do not personally gain anything from this behaviour (Gintis, 2016). Some people even act in altruistic or heroic ways when they gain nothing and risk much. Social life is evidently richer than conflict theorists would have us believe; selfishness is not the only reason for social interaction.

Fair or altruistic behaviour occurs when people interact with others based on learned norms. According to these norms, people should act honourably and help those in need, even when doing so costs a lot. But how do you learn such norms, not to mention roles and statuses? First, you need to see yourself from the point of view of the people with whom you interact (Chapter 4, Socialization), an act that George Herbert Mead called "taking the role of the other." According to Mead, we understand how other people see us by interpreting their words and nonverbal signals, and we then adjust our behaviour to fit their expectations

about how we ought to behave. We learn norms and adopt roles and statuses during such symbolic interaction.

This type of social learning is different from studying a user manual or a textbook. As we interact with others, we constantly negotiate and modify the norms, roles, and statuses that we encounter, and we shape them to suit our preferences. In other words, we actively and creatively learn norms, roles, and statuses rather than taking them on passively and automatically (Turner, 2006). Let us explore this process by considering how people ingeniously manage the impressions they give to others during social interaction.

Goffman's Dramaturgical Analysis

Dramaturgical analysis views social interaction as a sort of play, in which people present themselves so that they appear in the best possible light.

One of the most popular variants of symbolic interactionism is **dramaturgical analysis**, first developed by Erving Goffman (1959). Goffman's approach is inspired by Shakespeare's line in *As You Like It:* "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

Goffman believed that we constantly engage in role-playing, as is most evident when we are "front stage" in public settings. Acting front stage requires the use of props, set gestures, and memorized lines, just as in a play. Consider servers in a restaurant. Like actors onstage, servers wear uniforms and smiles, and recite fixed lines, such as "How are you? My name is Sam and I'm your server today. May I get you a drink before you order your meal?" When servers go "backstage," they can relax and discuss the front-stage performance with their castmates ("Those kids at table six are driving me nuts!"). As a result, we often distinguish between our public roles and our "true" selves. However, it is important to note that even when we are backstage, we continue to role-play and manage impressions, although we are likely to be less aware of it. For instance, in the kitchen, a server may try to present herself in the best possible light to impress her boss so that she will be more likely to get additional shifts.

Dramaturgical analysis therefore implies there is no single self, just the ensemble of roles we play in different social contexts. Servers in restaurants also play many roles when they are not working, such as playing on a baseball team, singing in a choir, and hanging out with friends on a patio. Each of these roles has its own norms about what kinds of "costumes" to wear, what topics of conversation to engage in, and so on.

Role distancing involves giving the impression that we are just "going through the motions" but actually lack serious commitment to a role.

Although everyone plays on many front stages in everyday life, we do not always enjoy playing our roles. Accordingly, people may engage in role distancing if a role is stressful. **Role distancing** involves giving the impression of just "going through the motions" without making a serious commitment to a role. When people think a role they are playing is embarrassing or beneath them, they often want to give their peers the impression that the role is not their "true" self. For example, they might rationalize their behaviour by saying things like, *my parents force me to sing in the church choir; I'm working at McDonald's just to earn a few extra dollars, but I'm going back to college next semester;* or *this old car I'm driving is just a loaner.* People use these kinds of rationalizations when trying to distance themselves from a role.

Onstage, people typically manage impressions so they can be seen in the best possible light. For example, sociologists have observed how students beginning medical school model their behaviour after the doctors in charge; how they set themselves apart from patients by using medical vocabulary and wearing a white lab coat; how they use medical jargon to hide their ignorance and maintain their authority when dealing with patients; and how they ask questions they know the answer to so that they can impress their teachers. According to one third-year student, "The best way of impressing [advisers] with your competence is asking questions you know the answer to. Because if they ever put it back on you, 'Well, what do *you* think?' then you can tell them what you think and you'd give a very intelligent answer because you knew it. You didn't ask it to find out information. You asked it to impress people" (quoted in Haas and Shaffir, 1987). In other words, medical students learn their new role by engaging in impression management, not by taking a course in how to act like a doctor (Han, Roberts, and Korte, 2015).

Ethnomethodology

Goffman's view of social interaction seems cynical. He portrays people as being inauthentic or constantly playing roles but never really being themselves.

However discomforting Goffman's cynicism may be, we should not overlook his valuable sociological point: The stability of social life depends on our adherence to norms, roles, and statuses. If that adherence broke down, social life would become chaotic. Take something as simple as walking down a busy street. Hordes of pedestrians rush toward you yet rarely collide with you. Collision is avoided because of a norm that nobody actually teaches and few people are aware of but almost everyone follows. If someone blocks your way, you move to the right. When you move to the right and the person walking toward you moves to the right (your left), you avoid bumping into each other.

Similarly, consider the norm of "civil inattention." When we pass people in public, we may establish momentary eye contact out of friendliness but we usually look away quickly. According to Goffman, such a gesture is a "ritual" of respect, a patterned and expected action that affirms our respect for strangers. Imagine what would happen if you fixed your stare at a stranger for a few seconds longer than the norm. Rather than being seen as respectful, your intention might be viewed as rude, intrusive, or hostile. Thus, we would not even be able to walk down a street in peace were it not for the existence of certain unstated norms. These and many other norms, some explicit and some not, make an orderly social life possible (Goffman, 1963, 1971).

By emphasizing how we construct social reality during interaction, symbolic interactionists downplay the importance of norms and understandings that *precede* any given interaction. **Ethnomethodology** tries to correct this shortcoming. Ethnomethodology is the study of the methods ordinary people use, often unconsciously, to make sense of what others do and say. Ethnomethodologists stress that everyday interactions could not take place without pre-existing shared norms and understandings. The norm of moving to the right to avoid bumping into an oncoming pedestrian and the norm of civil inattention are both examples of pre-existing shared norms and understandings.

Ethnomethodology is the study of how people make sense of what others do and say by adhering to pre-existing norms.

To illustrate the importance of pre-existing shared norms and understandings, Harold Garfinkel conducted a series of breaching experiments. **Breaching experiments** illustrate the importance of everyday, ritualistic interactions by disrupting interaction patterns. In one such experiment, he asked one of his students to interpret a casual greeting in an unexpected way (Garfinkel, 1967: 44):

Breaching experiments illustrate the importance of everyday, ritualistic interactions by disrupting interaction patterns.

> Acquaintance: [waving cheerily] How are you?
>
> Student: How am I in regard to what? My health, my finances, my schoolwork, my peace of mind, my . . . ?
>
> Acquaintance: [red in the face and suddenly out of control] Look! I was just trying to be polite. Frankly, I don't give a damn how you are.

As this example shows, social interaction requires tacit agreement between the actors about what is normal and expected. Without shared norms and understandings, no sustained interaction can occur. When someone violates the assumptions underlying the stability and meaning of daily life, people are likely to become upset and end the interaction. The reaction of shock and outrage generated by breaching experiments, coupled with the rush to restore orderly interaction, illustrates the place and importance of daily interaction rituals (Collins, 2013).

Assuming the existence of shared norms and understandings, let us now inquire briefly into the way people communicate in face-to-face interaction. This issue may seem trivial. However, as you will soon see, having a conversation is actually a wonder of intricate complexity.

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

In the 1950s, an article in a British newspaper proclaimed that an electronic translating device had been invented at the University of London. The article stated that "as fast as

[a user] could type the words in, say, French, the equivalent in Hungarian or Russian would issue forth on the tape" (quoted in Silberman, 2000: 225). In reality, the report greatly exaggerated the device's abilities. It soon became a standing joke that if you ask a computer to translate into Russian the New Testament proverb "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," the output would read, "The vodka is good, but the steak is lousy." Although we are now closer to high-quality machine translation than ever before, a practical Universal Translator exists only in the world of *Star Trek*.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE

In the real world, people can translate better than computers can because computer programs have difficulty making sense of the social and cultural context in which language is used. Computer translations often fail because the same words can mean different things in different settings and computers don't have access to contextual cues. Machine translation works best when applied to a single social context, such as weather forecasting or oil exploration. In these situations, the specialized vocabulary and meanings specific to the particular context are built into the program, thereby reducing ambiguity. Computers can then "understand" the words well enough to translate them relatively accurately. In contrast, humans reduce ambiguity and make sense of words by learning the nuances of meaning in different cultural and social contexts over an extended time, as well as by using nonverbal cues.

STATUS CUES

As noted earlier, social life involves relationships between individuals occupying social positions. Participants need information to define the status of others and announce their own status to others. As Goffman (1959) observed, when individuals interact, they try to obtain information that will help them define the situation and therefore make interaction easier. Status identification is assisted by focusing on **status cues**, which are visual indicators of a person's social position. Status cues come in many forms, ranging from the way people dress and speak to where they live, how they furnish their homes, and the condition of their teeth.

Status cues are visual indicators of a person's social position.

Although status cues can help people define the situation and thus facilitate social interaction, they also pose a social danger since they can swiftly degenerate into stereotypes. **Stereotypes** are inflexible views of how members of various groups act, regardless of whether individual group members actually behave that way. As a result of their rigidity, stereotypes create social barriers that impair interaction or prevent it altogether.

Stereotypes are rigid views of how members of various groups act, regardless of whether individual group members really behave that way.

For instance, every year in Toronto, police officers stop, question, and document hundreds of thousands of people on foot, on bicycles, and in cars. They write down each person's name, phone number, date of birth, address, height, weight, race, and the names of that person's associates. This procedure is commonly called "carding." Reasons for carding include "general investigation," "loitering," "suspicious activity," "related to a radio call," or "as a result of a traffic stop." In the great majority of cases, no charge or arrest results. Less than one-fifth of the people who are carded have committed a crime in the preceding decade.

In Toronto's 72 police districts, Black people are on average 3.2 times more likely than White people to be carded, although they represent just 8.4 percent of the city's population (City of Toronto, 2015; *Toronto Star*, 2015). The people least likely to be stopped while driving are older, highly educated Asian females. The people most likely to be stopped while driving are young, highly educated Black males (Wortley, Brownfield, and Hagan, 1996). Presumably, young black men who are highly educated drive relatively expensive cars because they earn relatively high incomes. But some police officers apparently suspect that a Black man with money is up to no good! In this case, a social cue has become a stereotype that guides police action. Many Black people, the great majority of whom never commit an illegal act, view this police practice as harassment. Racial stereotyping therefore helps perpetuate the often poor relations between the Black community

CTV News/Bell Media

Toronto police card a young Black man.

and law enforcement officials, most recently expressed in the form of the Black Lives Matter movement.

In addition to status cues, verbal communication and interaction are assisted by interpretations of body language and facial expression.

BODY LANGUAGE AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Earlier you learned that female status is usually associated with less power than male status is. Evidence of gender inequality at the micro-sociological level is evident in the conversation analysis studies reported earlier in the chapter. Such verbal communication inequalities are reinforced through non-verbal communication (see Figure 5.4).

Consider, for example, characteristics of body language that are widely considered to be "feminine." A feminine person "keeps her body small and contained," makes sure she "doesn't take up too much space or impose herself," and "walks and sits in tightly packaged ways" (Wade, 2013:1). In contrast, expansive body postures indicate power and entitlement. Recent studies thus show that expansive body postures lead people to feel more powerful and that such feelings encourage deviant conduct (Peper et al., 2016). Whether these postures are assumed consciously or not makes little difference. Under experimental conditions, people who assume expansive postures are more likely to cheat on a test, steal money, and commit traffic violations. These facts about body language show how structural inequality between women and men shows up in everyday, micro-level interaction.

Despite the wide variety of facial expressions in the human repertoire, research suggests that the facial expression of emotion is quite similar across cultures (Ekman, 1999). Cross-cultural similarities are found in the facial expression of not only happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and surprise, but also the more complex emotions of amusement, contempt, contentment, embarrassment, excitement, guilt, pride, relief, satisfaction, sensory pleasure, and shame. But, like all symbols, facial expressions require interpretation, which are prone to misreading (Fernandez-Dols et al., 1997). Typically, untrained observers cannot distinguish fake from genuine smiles more often than one could expect based on chance (Wade, 2010). Facial expressions made when lying are also prone to misinterpretation. With training, however, the accuracy of reading facial expressions can be markedly improved.

Symbolic interpretation is always embedded in a cultural context, and different cultural expectations can lead to colossal misunderstandings. For instance, until recently, educated

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FIGURE 5.4

Body Language. Among other things, body language communicates the degree to which people conform to gender roles, or widely shared expectations about how males and females are supposed to act. In these illustrations, which postures suggest power and aggressiveness? Which suggest compliance? Which are "appropriate" to the person's gender? Recently, efforts have been made to change traditional, gender-appropriate postures. For example, some women have promoted an end to "manspreading" on subways and urged women to "lean in" more aggressively during formal meetings. Do you witness such change in your everyday life?

Japanese people refrained from saying no to avoid appearing rude. Instead, they discreetly changed the subject and smiled politely to express disagreement. Visiting North Americans commonly thought their Japanese hosts were saying yes because of the politeness, the smile, and the absence of a no, when in fact they were saying no.

Similarly, gestures and body postures mean different things in different societies and cultures. For example, in North American society, we use our outstretched hand and extended finger to point, while people raised in other cultures tip their head or use their

Theory	Focus
Feminist	Status differences between women and men structure social interaction.
Conflict	The competitive exchange of valued resources structures social interaction.
Symbolic Interactionist	Social interaction involves the interpretation, negotiation, and modification of norms, roles, and statuses.

TABLE 5.2
Theories of Social Interaction

chin or eyes. Likewise, North Americans nod their heads yes and shake no, but others nod no and shake yes.

Finally, we must note that in all societies, people communicate by manipulating the space that separates them from others (Hall, 1966; Westwick, 2013). According to sociologists, we are surrounded by four zones that vary in size from one society to the next. In North America, an intimate zone extends about half a metre from the body and is restricted to people with whom we want sustained physical contact. A personal zone extends from about 0.5 metres to 1.5 metres away and is reserved for friends and acquaintances from whom we tolerate only a small amount of physical intimacy. The social zone is situated roughly 1.5 metres to 3.5 metres away from us, and other than a handshake, no physical contact is permitted from people restricted to that zone. The public zone starts around 3.5 metres from our bodies and is used to distinguish a performer or a speaker from an audience.

Personal space in face-to-face interaction is normal and healthy. It provides individuals with varying comfort zones depending on the situation. Numerous studies have also shown that this zone widens when we are anxious and narrows when we are relaxed (Graziano, 2018). A face-to-face interaction in the COVID-19 era might therefore be misinterpreted as emotional distancing because we are expected to remain two metres away from anyone who is not a member of our household. A key to successful and friendly communication during social distancing is to ensure that physical distance is not interpreted as emotional distance, which implies that a person's other bodily or facial expressions, such as a smile, a thumbs up or a nod can go a long way.

As these examples show, although most face-to-face interaction is straightforward and unproblematic, many factors can affect interaction. A wide range of cultural assumptions, unconscious understandings, and nonverbal cues underlie human interaction and make communication possible (see Table 5.2).

zebrik/Shutterstock

This hand gesture is sometimes called the "fig" and it means different things in different cultures. In North America, adults often make this gesture when they play with children and pretend "I've got your nose." However, the fig conveyed good luck in ancient Rome, and it represents a threat in India and "screw you" in Russia, Turkey, and South Korea. It also means "T" in the American Sign Language alphabet, but was modified in the International Sign Language alphabet to avoid giving offence.

Time for Review

- What is role distancing? How might it be evident in a 12-year-old assigned the chore of cleaning the toilet?
- What are breaching experiments? What do they tell us about social life?
- What is the difference between front-stage and back-stage role performances?
- Give an example from your everyday experience where using status cues successfully supported interaction. Give an example where using status cues failed to support interaction.
- Interlock your fingers and place your connected hands behind your head. Your arms will now form "elephant ears." How does this posture affect your feeling of dominance or submissiveness? Why?

DmitryOnishchik/Thinkstock

Society fits together like a set of nested Russian dolls, with face-to-face interaction constituting the smallest doll in the set.

From Small Processes to Big Structures

In this chapter, we referred to norms, roles, and statuses as the "building blocks" of social life. These building blocks form the microstructures within which face-to-face interaction takes place. In concluding, we add that sustained microlevel interaction often gives rise to higher-level structures—mesostructures, such as networks, groups, and organizations. In the next chapter (Networks, Groups, Bureaucracies, and Societies), we examine these intermediate-level structures. Later, in Part 4 of this book (Institutions), we show how these intermediate-level structures can form macrolevel structures known as *institutions*.

Society, it will emerge, fits together like a set of nested Russian dolls, with face-to-face interaction constituting the smallest doll in the set. Big structures set limits to the operation of small structures. However, it is within small structures that people interpret, negotiate, and modify their immediate social settings, thus giving big structures their dynamism and their life.

Summary

1. **What are the key building blocks for the study of social interaction?**
   Social life is generally organized or patterned. We can map the patterns by identifying social statuses and the norms attached to them. Persons are unique individuals who bring organizations to life when they occupy statuses governed by norms. Organized social life is expressed by roles. When norms are simple, direct, and clear, roles are played. However, the norms guiding social action are often incomplete, inappropriate, ambiguous, or contradictory. These conditions encourage the use of individual autonomy through role-making

2. **How have social media influenced social interaction?**
   Some observers claim that social media reduce the human attention span, contribute to loneliness, and lower trust, privacy, and empathy. However, research suggests that the situation is more complex. A variety of factors that have nothing to do with social media, such as changes in family life and schooling, may be responsible for observed changes in behaviour. Moreover, as studies of empathy show, social media have positive and negative effects, depending on the purposes for which they are used.

3. **How does feminist theory help us understand the role of emotions in social interaction?**
   Gender differences exist in interaction patterns and emotional expression. Feminists relate these differences to power inequalities between women and men. On average, women inhabit lower statuses. They are usually required to perform more emotion management and emotion labour than men are.

4. **How does conflict theory help us understand the role of power in social interaction?**
   Power differences between people influence the form and emotional character of social interaction. Interactions involving a high level of inequality ("domination") are characterized by fear on the part of subordinates and low efficiency. Interactions involving a medium level of inequality ("competition") are characterized by envy on the part of subordinates and moderate efficiency. Interactions involving a low level of inequality ("cooperation") are characterized by trust on the part of subordinates and high efficiency. In terms of achieving their desired outcomes, people with more power are

generally more successful than are people with less power. They achieve their desired outcomes partly by influencing the construction of cultural scaffolding that defines some outcomes as preferable to others.

5. **How does symbolic interactionism help us understand social interaction?**
Symbolic interactionists focus on how people create meaning in the course of social interaction and on how they negotiate and modify roles, statuses, and norms. Symbolic interactionism has several variants. Dramaturgical analysis is based on the idea that people play roles in their daily lives in much the same way actors on stage play roles. Ethnomethodology analyzes the methods people use to make sense of what others do and say. It insists on the importance of pre-existing shared norms and understandings in making everyday interaction possible. While language plays a central role in interaction, nonverbal symbols are also important. Status cues, body language, and facial expression direct lines of communication and coordinate action. The form of mediated communication shapes the character of how messages are sent and received. The medium affects the message.

6 Networks, Groups, Bureaucracies, and Societies

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Recognize that although people usually act to satisfy their interests and emotions, social collectivities often influence people to suppress their emotions and act against their interests.
- Illustrate the fact that only a few social ties separate us from complete strangers.
- Distinguish social networks, groups, bureaucracies, and societies.
- Identify ways in which social groups impose conformity on members and draw boundaries between those who belong and those who do not.
- Describe how bureaucracies can be made more efficient.
- Explain how humans' changing relationship to nature has affected population size, the permanence of settlements, the specialization of work tasks, labour productivity, and social inequality.

Beyond Individual Motives

The Holocaust

On June 28, 1941, the train station in Smolensk, a provincial capital of about 100 000 people on Russia's western border, was especially busy. Along with civilians, hundreds of Soviet Red Army soldiers were waiting for their train, nervously talking, smoking, writing letters to their loved ones, and sleeping restlessly on the floor of the large stone and glass station. German troops had invaded the nearby city of Minsk in Belarus a couple of days earlier. The Soviet soldiers were preparing to defend Russia against the expected Nazi onslaught.

That day, Robert Brym's father was waiting patiently in line to buy food. Suddenly, he saw flares streaking over the station. In seconds, Stuka dive-bombers struck. Inside the station, shards of glass, blocks of stone, and mounds of earth fell indiscriminately on sleeping soldiers and nursing mothers alike. In the ensuing panic, people trampled one another to get out. In minutes, the train station was rubble.

Nearly two years earlier, Robert's father had escaped from his hometown near Warsaw, Poland, when the Nazis had invaded. Now, he was on the run again. The Nazis occupied Smolensk a few weeks after their dive-bombers destroyed its train station. By that time, Robert's father was deep in the Russian interior, serving in a workers' battalion attached to the Soviet Red Army.

"My father was one of 300 000 Polish Jews who fled eastward into Russia before the Nazi genocide machine could reach them," says Robert. "The remaining 3 million Polish Jews were killed in various ways. Some died in battle. Many more, like my father's mother and younger siblings, were rounded up like diseased cattle and shot. However, most of Poland's Jews wound up in the concentration camps. Those deemed unfit were shipped to the gas chambers. Those declared able to work were turned into slaves until they could work no more. Then they, too, met their fate. A mere 9 percent of Poland's 3.3 million Jews survived World War II. The Nazi regime was responsible for the death of 6 million Jews in Europe (Burleigh, 2000).

"One question that always perplexed my father about the war was this: How was it possible for many thousands of ordinary Germans—products of what he regarded as the most advanced civilization on earth—to systematically murder millions of defenceless and innocent Jews, Roma ('Gypsies'), gays, lesbians, communists, and people with mental disabilities in the death camps? To answer this question adequately, we must borrow ideas from the sociological study of networks, groups, and bureaucracies."

Majdanek concentration camp near Lublin, Poland, 1944

AFP/Getty Images

How Social Groups Shape Our Actions

How could ordinary German citizens commit the most heinous crime of the twentieth century? The conventional, non-sociological answer is that the Nazis were evil, sadistic, or deluded, believing that

German industrialist Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson, centre) searches for his plant manager, Itzhak Stern, among a trainload of Polish Jews about to be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in *Schindler's List*. The movie turns the history of Nazism into a morality play, a struggle between good and evil forces. It does not probe into the sociological roots of good and evil.

The Canadian Press/The Everett Collection

Jews and other "subhumans" threatened the existence of the German people. As a result, in the Nazi mind, the innocents had to be killed. This answer is given in the 1993 movie *Schindler's List* and in many other accounts.

Yet it is far from the whole story. Sociology and social psychology (a field that straddles the border between sociology and psychology) emphasize three other factors:

1. *Norms of solidarity demand conformity.* Friends, lovers, spouses, teammates, and comrades-in-arms develop shared ideas or "norms of solidarity" about how to behave toward each other in order to maintain their relationships. However, we sometimes end up paying more attention to these norms of solidarity than to the morality of our actions because these relationships are emotionally important to us. For example, a study of Nazi soldiers who operated in the Polish countryside tracking down and killing Jews and other "enemies" of Germany found that the soldiers often did not necessarily hate the people they slaughtered, but they also had few misgivings about their actions (Browning, 1992). Their behaviour was largely a reflection of the deep loyalty they felt toward one another. In other words, they simply believed they had to get the job done and that they would let down their comrades if they failed to do so. Thus, they committed atrocities partly because they just wanted to maintain group morale, solidarity, and loyalty, not because they were extraordinarily evil. They acted to support their friendship ties and to serve their group, just like most people do.

   Although the actions of the Nazi regime may seem extreme, examination of other types of criminal behaviour reveals a similar dynamic. For example, employees rarely report crimes committed by corporations. Why? They may worry about being reprimanded or fired if they become whistleblowers, but often more important is their desire not to let down their co-workers. Similarly, gang members engage in criminal acts to seek financial gain, but they also see it as a way of maintaining a close social bond with their fellow gang members.

   A study of the small number of Polish Christians who helped save Jews during World War II helps clarify why some people violate group norms (Tec, 1986). The heroism of these Polish Christians was not correlated with their educational attainment, political orientation, religious background, or even attitudes toward Jews. In fact, some Polish Christians who helped save Jews were antisemitic. Instead, these Christian heroes were, for one reason or another, estranged or cut off from mainstream norms.

Because they were poorly socialized into the norms of their society, they were freer not to conform and instead to act in ways they believed were right. We could tell a roughly similar story about corporate whistleblowers or people who turn in their fellow gang members. They are disloyal from an insider's point of view but heroic from an outsider's viewpoint, often because they have been poorly socialized into the group's norms (see Box 6.1, Social Policy).

2. *Structures of authority tend to render people obedient.* Most people find it difficult to disobey authorities because they fear being ridiculed, ostracized, or punished. A classic experiment conducted by social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1974) vividly demonstrates this tendency. Milgram told his subjects that they were participating in a study on punishment and learning. Each subject was brought to a room where a man was strapped to a chair with an electrode attached to his wrist. The experimental subject sat in front of a console with 30 switches with labels ranging from "15 volts" to "450 volts," along with labels ranging from "Slight shock" to "Danger: severe shock." The experimental subjects were told to administer the lowest shock for the man's first wrong answer and then increase the voltage each time he made an error. In reality, the man strapped in the chair was an actor who did not actually receive

BOX 6.1 Social Policy

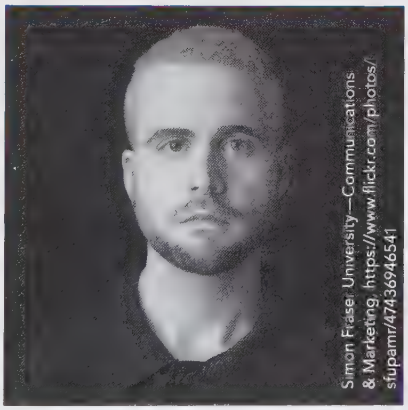
THE CANADIAN WHISTLEBLOWER WHO SHOCKED THE WORLD

An international data scandal erupted in 2018. Christopher Wylie, a Canadian, was at the centre of it.

Wylie revealed that two years earlier, Cambridge Analytica, a data analytics firm in the United Kingdom, had managed to collect deeply personal data on 50 million US Facebook users. It sold the data to the Republican presidential campaign in the United States. Knowing all the likes and dislikes of the Facebook users, the campaign created individualized ads on Facebook and elsewhere appealing to the users' deepest anxieties and passions. The ads were highly effective in convincing likely non-voters to go out and vote for Donald Trump, and likely supporters of Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate, not to vote. The ads were a critically important factor helping Donald Trump win the tight 2016 presidential election.

In the aftermath of Wylie's disclosures, Cambridge Analytica went out of business. The role of Facebook and other social media sites came under government and popular scrutiny for failing to adequately protect user privacy. And the naiveté of many (though far from all) social media users about the way social media exposes them to manipulation and harm vanished. As Wylie said in one interview:

> *On social media you curate yourself, you put so much info about who you are in one single place. So wherever you go and like something, you are giving me a clue as to who you are as a person and so all of this can be captured very easily and run through an algorithm that learns who you are.*
> *(Quoted in Mejia, 2018)*



Christopher Wylie, 2019

Christopher Wylie was born and raised in Victoria, British Columbia. At the age of six, he was abused by a mentally unstable person associated with the school he attended. At the age of 14, he successfully sued the British Columbia Ministry of Education, which was forced to change its policies concerning bullying. Diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia, Wylie dropped out of school at 16. After teaching himself to code, he got a law degree at the prestigious London School of Economics. By the time he was 24, he was working at Cambridge Analytica, having scored a British Tier 1 Exceptional Talent visa, awarded to just 200 people annually. He quickly rose to head of research. Wylie is gay and a vegan. By becoming a traitor to Cambridge Analytica, he has been praised as perhaps the most famous Canadian whistleblower of all time.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What is it about Christopher Wylie that may have led him to violate the norm of solidarity with his employer and work colleagues and become a whistleblower?
2. What risk of harm do whistleblowers suffer from their employers and others?

a shock. As the experimental subject increased the current, the actor began to thrash about, shouting for mercy and begging to be released. If at any point the experimental subjects hesitated to administer additional current, Milgram reassured them that the man would be fine. He also emphasized that the experiment's success depended on the subject's obedience.

At the outset, the subjects had been told that they could end the experiment at any time. Remarkably, however, 71 percent of the subjects were willing to administer shocks of 285 volts or more, even though the switches starting at that level were labelled "Intense shock," "Extreme intensity shock," and "Danger: severe shock," and despite the fact that the actor appeared to be in great distress.

Milgram's experiment makes it clear that we tend to obey those in power, even if the authority structure is new and artificial, even if we are free to walk away from it with no repercussions, and even if we think we are causing terrible pain to another human being. In this context, the actions and inactions of German citizens in World War II become more understandable, if no more forgivable.

3. *Bureaucracies are highly effective structures of authority.* The Nazi genocide machine was so effective because it was a well-organized bureaucracy. According to Max Weber (1978), a **bureaucracy** is a large, impersonal organization made up of many clearly defined positions with a permanent, salaried staff of qualified experts arranged in a hierarchy. A bureaucracy has written goals, rules, and procedures, and staff members usually try to find more efficient ways of running their organization. *Efficiency* means achieving the bureaucracy's goals at the least cost.

A **bureaucracy** is a large, impersonal organization comprising many clearly defined positions arranged in a hierarchy. A bureaucracy has a permanent, salaried staff of qualified experts, and written goals, rules, and procedures. Ideally, staff members usually try to find ways of running the bureaucracy more efficiently.

For example, to achieve the Nazi's goal of killing Jews and other so-called undesirables, the job was broken into many small tasks. Most officials performed only one function, such as checking train schedules, organizing entertainment for camp guards, maintaining supplies of Zyklon B gas, or removing ashes from the crematoria. By focusing only on their jobs, many of which were removed from the gas chambers and death camps in occupied Poland, officials could avoid, or at least ignore, the full horror caused by the Nazi genocide machine.[1] Many factors account for variations in Jewish victimization rates across Europe during World War II but it is not coincidental that the proportion of Jews killed was highest in countries such as Holland, where the Nazi bureaucracy was best organized, rather than in Nazi-controlled countries such as Romania, where the hatred of Jews was most intense (Bauman, 1991; Sofsky, 1997 [1993]).

In sum, the sociological reply to the question posed by Robert's father is that the nature of groups and bureaucracies, not just blind hatred, made it possible for the Nazis to kill innocent people so ruthlessly.

People commonly think *individual* motives prompt our actions, and for good reason. As we saw in Chapter 5, Social Interaction, we often make rational calculations to maximize gains and minimize losses. In addition, deeply held emotions partly govern our behaviour. However, this chapter asks you to make a conceptual leap beyond the individual motives that prompt us to act in certain ways. We ask you to consider the way four kinds of social *collectivities* shape our actions: networks, groups, bureaucratic organizations, and whole societies. The limitations of an analysis based exclusively on individual motives should be clear from our discussion of the social roots of evil. The advantages of considering how social collectivities affect us should become clear as you read. We begin by considering the nature and effects of social networks.

Time for Review

- What are norms of solidarity and how do they work to render people obedient?
- How do authority structures help to ensure conformity?
- Why are bureaucracies especially efficient means of ensuring conformity?

Social Networks

It's a Small World

Suppose you were asked to deliver a letter to a complete stranger on the other side of the country, but you could use only people you knew as intermediaries. In other words, you have to give the letter to an acquaintance, who in turn has to give the letter to one of his, her, or their acquaintances, and so on. Research shows that, on average, it will take no more than six acquaintances to get the letter to the stranger. This finding indicates that we live in a small world with just a few social ties separating us from everyone else (Travers and Milgram, 1969).

We live in a small world because our social networks are made up of overlapping sets of social relations. Although an individual may know only a small number of people, his or her family members, friends, co-workers, and other acquaintances know many more people who extend far beyond that individual's personal network. For example, although the authors of this textbook are likely to be complete strangers to you, your professor may know one of us or at least know someone who knows one of us. No more than three links probably separate us from you. In other words, we live in a small world because our social networks connect us to the larger world.

Sociologists define a **social network** as a set of individuals linked by the exchange of material or emotional resources, including everything from money to friendship. The patterns of exchange determine the boundaries of the network. Members think of themselves as network members, and they tend to exchange resources more frequently with one another than with non-members. Your personal acquaintances form the boundaries of your personal network. However, because each of your network members is linked to other people, you are indirectly connected to people you have never met. These connections create a small world that extends far beyond your personal network.

A social network is a bounded set of individuals who are linked by the exchange of material or emotional resources. The patterns of exchange determine the boundaries of the network. Members exchange resources more frequently with one another than with non-members. They also think of themselves as network members. Social networks may be formal (defined in writing), but they are more often informal (defined only in practice).

THE VALUE OF NETWORK ANALYSIS

In the study of social networks, the units of analysis or *nodes* can range from individuals to groups to organizations, and even to countries (Wellman and Berkowitz, 1997). As a result, social network analysts have examined everything from intimate relationships between lovers to diplomatic relations among nations.

Unlike organizations, most networks do not have names or offices. While Scouts Canada's headquarters is at 1345 Baseline Road in Ottawa, no headquarters exists for your circle of friends. But although networks appear to lie beneath the more visible collectivities of social life, they are just as real and just as important. In fact, some analysts claim that we can obtain a full understanding of why certain things happen in the social world only by probing below the surface of highly visible, formally organized collectivities and examining the network level. As you will now learn, studying social networks provides information on a wide range of social phenomena, including how people find jobs and how they get sick.

Library of Congress

Mary Pickford, 1910

DFree/Shutterstock

Sandra Oh, 2016

Mary Pickford was born in Toronto in 1892. She was arguably the most famous actor of the silent film era, performing in her last film in 1949. Sandra Oh, most recently the star of BBC America's award-winning *Killing Eve*, was born in Vancouver in 1971. She was in her first feature film in 1994, nearly half a century after Pickford made her last movie. How many films link Pickford to Oh? Only three: Pickford was in *Amarilly of Clothes-Line Alley* (1918) with Tom Wilson, who was in *That Darn Cat* (1997) with Michael McKean, who was in *For Your Consideration* (2006) with Sandra Oh. About 358 000 actors have performed in the roughly 128 000 movies that have ever been made, but nobody has ever found more than eight movie links standing between any two actors, no matter how obscure and no matter what language they performed in. "Six degrees of separation" may be an exaggeration—but not by much.

Finding a Job

Social networks are a significant source of information regarding events, ideas, and opportunities. For instance, friends and acquaintances may introduce you to an interesting college or university course or a great restaurant, or to a satisfying occupation or a future spouse.

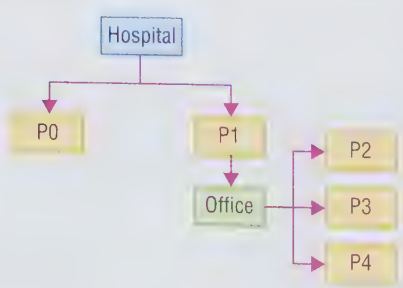
Think about how you would go about finding a job. Would you look in the Help Wanted section of your local newspaper, scan the Internet, or walk around town looking for "Employee Wanted" signs? Although you might employ any of these strategies, you might also learn about employment opportunities from other people. But what kind of people? According to sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973), you have strong ties to people who are close to you, such as family members and friends, and weak ties to acquaintances, such as people you meet at parties and friends of friends. Surprisingly, Granovetter's research found that weak ties are more important than strong ties in finding a job. You might assume that a close friend or relative would make more of an effort to help you find a job than an acquaintance would, but Granovetter found that acquaintances are more likely to provide useful information. That is because people who are close to you typically share overlapping networks. Therefore, the information they can provide about job opportunities is often redundant. In contrast, mere acquaintances are likely to be connected to *diverse* networks. They can therefore provide information about many different job openings and introduce you to many different potential employers. In addition, people usually have more weak ties than strong ties, so the sum of weak ties holds more information about job opportunities than the sum of strong ties. Granovetter concluded that the "strength of weak ties" lies in their diversity and abundance.

Contracting COVID-19

Social network analysis in the form of contact tracing has been a powerful tool in the fight against COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Contact tracing involves identifying people who have come into contact with an infected person and recording when and where contact occurred. With such information, it is possible to identify hotspots where infection is likely, contacts who need to be quarantined so the spread of the infection can be contained, and "superspreaders" who have many contacts and urgently need to be quarantined (Chen, Chen, and King 2010).

Figure 6.1 diagrams a COVID-19 transmission network. In this hypothetical case, testing allows a researcher to discover an infected patient (P4) in an office. Two days later, patients P3 and P2 test positive in the same office, which is declared a hotspot. The researcher interviews all three infected patients about who they were in contact with over the past week (five days is the average time that elapses between contact with COVID-19 and the appearance of symptoms, and two days elapsed between P4 and P3/P2 becoming symptomatic). She discovers the infected office workers had one contact in common: P1, a superspreader. An interview with P1 reveals that he had recently visited a hospital floor where patient zero (P0) was recovering from COVID-19. Armed with this information, the

FIGURE 6.1
COVID-19 Transmission Network



researcher recommends that the office be shut down and disinfected, all people working in the office go into self-isolation for two weeks (the length of time it normally takes to recover from a COVID-19 infection), and that special precautions be taken to improve hygiene and disinfection in the hospital.

In the real world, infectious disease transmission networks are more complex than the network displayed in Figure 6.1, but even the kind of simple network analysis just described can limit the amount of suffering and death experienced by a population.

Online Networks

After the telegraph became popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, operators in widely separated offices started communicating with each other when they weren't busy with customers. Some of the operators became long-distance friends. Meanwhile, some customers used the telegraph to form friendships. Some young people even used the new technology to become romantically involved. At least one couple got married via telegraph, much to the chagrin of the bride's parents (Baym, 2015a: 113, 117).

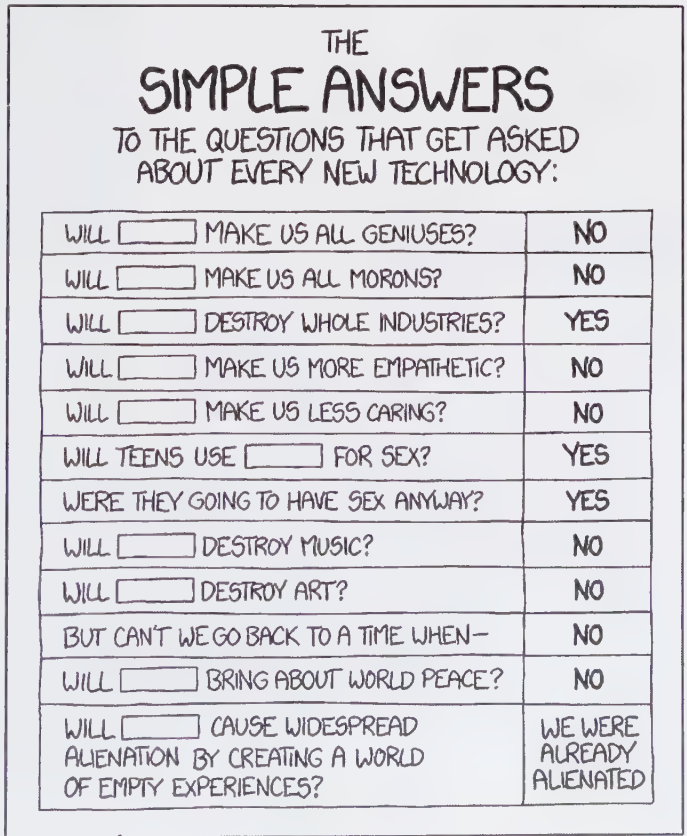
Many people were scandalized by such goings-on. Where would it all lead? To meetings with dangerous strangers? To interracial relationships? To premarital sex? The new technology frightened many people because it disrupted traditional mechanisms of relationship formation and the authority of the family and church in setting standards of behaviour.

The introduction of every new technology, from the automobile to the comic book to the cellphone, has been greeted with similar anxiety. Today, for example, some people believe that social media impair social interaction, isolate individuals, and ruin community life. They note that friends meeting for coffee in, say, 1990 would pay close attention to each other, whereas friends meeting for coffee today routinely interrupt their interaction to check and respond to text messages on their smartphone. Similarly, widespread Internet access allows people to spend an enormous amount of time staring at a computer screen instead of interacting face to face with family members and neighbours. From this point of view, the Internet disrupts and even destroys social life.

Virtual communities are bounded patterns of interaction and exchange that exist online, independently of time and space.

When sociologists examine Internet- and social media–based social interaction, they find a more complex reality. One study shows that the top three audiences for undergraduate Facebook users are "my old high school friends," "people in my classes," and "other friends." "Total strangers" are the fourth-ranked audience, followed by "someone I met at a party" and "family." Even when students meet total strangers online, they tend to be strangers within a known and trusted institution, such as their college or university. Facebook does not usually break down existing social ties. As undergraduates use Facebook, they tend to gain information and emotional support, solidifying existing offline relationships and strengthening community ties (Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe, 2007).

Most social networks on the Internet and on social media are based on shared interest. Shared interest often results in the formation of **virtual communities**, bounded patterns of interaction and exchange that exist online, independently of time and space (see Box 6.2, Sociology and the Media). Virtual communities bring together devotees of science fiction, Spanish literature, salamanders, and just about every other interest imaginable. However, sex and


THE
SIMPLE ANSWERS
TO THE QUESTIONS THAT GET ASKED ABOUT EVERY NEW TECHNOLOGY:
WILL [ ] MAKE US ALL GENIUSES? NO
WILL [ ] MAKE US ALL MORONS? NO
WILL [ ] DESTROY WHOLE INDUSTRIES? YES
WILL [ ] MAKE US MORE EMPATHETIC? NO
WILL [ ] MAKE US LESS CARING? NO
WILL TEENS USE [ ] FOR SEX? YES
WERE THEY GOING TO HAVE SEX ANYWAY? YES
WILL [ ] DESTROY MUSIC? NO
WILL [ ] DESTROY ART? NO
BUT CAN'T WE GO BACK TO A TIME WHEN— NO
WILL [ ] BRING ABOUT WORLD PEACE? NO
WILL [ ] CAUSE WIDESPREAD ALIENATION BY CREATING A WORLD OF EMPTY EXPERIENCES? WE WERE ALREADY ALIENATED
xkcd.com (2016). http://imgs.xkcd.com/comics/simple_answers.png
Not if you have Jesus! God's word can fill your heart!

romance are among the most popular interests that lead to the formation of new social relationships in cyberspace. Online dating sites facilitate the process.

Far from all relationships that crystallize on online dating sites endure. Tinder and Grindr allow one to flip through photos of nearby people interested in hooking up, and more often than not, when two people agree to meet, it is for a brief liaison. However, enduring romance can result from online dating. Sometimes it leads to marriage. In recent surveys, close to 40 percent of North American adults say they have used online dating sites and about 20 percent of them claim to have met their romantic partner or spouse online (Ansari, 2015: 81; Baym, 2015a: 115). "Meeting through friends" is still the most common way of finding a romantic partner or spouse—online dating ranks second—but it is rapidly declining in importance as the popularity of online dating soars.

Online dating has drawbacks. For example, people communicating online are not always truthful about who and what they are, and this can lead to disappointment when they meet face to face. The number of potential relationships one can find on online dating sites is so large that searching for matches can quickly start feeling like a chore.

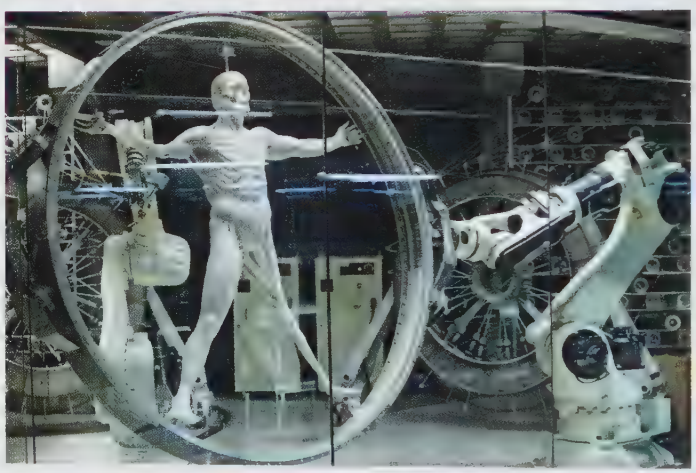
BOX 6.2 Sociology and the Media

WESTWORLD

Westworld holds out the possibility that technological advances will one day render the distinction between virtual and real communities obsolete, with unforeseen consequences.

Westworld is a large theme park populated by lifelike robot "hosts" and wealthy human "guests." Guests pay to act out their fantasies, which typically involve lots of paid sex with hosts and daily episodes of guests raping, torturing, and murdering hosts. These acts supposedly cause no real harm because damaged hosts are taken in for repair at night. Moreover, all trace of the atrocities they endured during the day is wiped from their memory. Guests thus get to go on a thrilling vacation that allows them to express their darkest (one might say inhuman) impulses while hosts wake up every morning not knowing what transpired the day before and therefore ready to endure the next round of pain.

Problems emerge when a programming glitch allows some hosts to experience memory flashes. Recollection of repeated mistreatment causes their sense of who they are to change: They start exercising free will, taking action to avoid daytime suffering. In other words, they start to become human as a kind of slave rebellion crystallizes.



Bad Robot/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

In the *Westworld* theme park, the distinction between real and virtual communities is erased as human guests act in violent ways that rob them of their humanity, while robot hosts rebel after developing human consciousness and free will.

Today, virtual communities and the "real world" influence each other. For example, participation in online virtual communities allows people to express parts of their self that were previously repressed, thus affecting who they are and how they act in the real world. But in *Westworld*, a virtual community is established in the real world. Participation in both settings causes humans to act inhumanely and robots to act like humans. The distinction between virtual and real, and between human and robot, is erased.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways does your participation in virtual communities, including interactions on social media, improve the quality of your intimate relationships? In what ways does your participation in virtual communities, including interactions on social media, detract from the quality of your intimate relationships?
2. Even if robots become smarter than people, can they be programmed in a way that poses no threat to people?

However, for most people, the advantages of online dating, including convenience, the lowered risk of interpersonal communication, and the screening of people for affinities, outweighs the disadvantages. Consequently, social media and the Internet in general are creating many new opportunities for forming social networks large and small, friendly and intimate.

The Building Blocks of Social Networks

Researchers often use mathematical models and computer programs to analyze social networks. However, no matter how sophisticated the mathematics or the software, network analysts begin from an understanding of the basic building blocks of social networks.

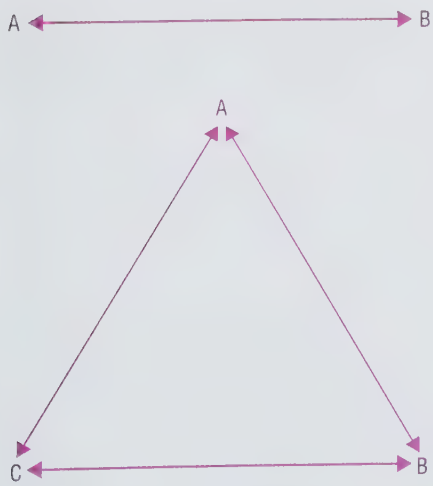
The most elementary network form is the **dyad**, a social relationship between two nodes or social units (e.g., people, firms, organizations, countries). A **triad** is a social relationship among three nodes. The difference between a dyad and a triad may seem small. However, the social dynamics of these two elementary network forms are fundamentally different, as sociologist Georg Simmel showed early in the twentieth century (Simmel, 1950; see Figure 6.2).

A dyad is a social relationship between two nodes or social units (e.g., people, firms, organizations, countries).

A triad is a social relationship among three nodes or social units (e.g., people, firms, organizations, countries).

In a dyadic relationship, such as a marriage, both partners tend to be intensely and intimately involved. Moreover, for the dyad to exist, it needs both partners—but to "die" it needs only one to opt out. A marriage, for example, can endure only if both partners are intensely involved; if one partner ceases active participation, the marriage is over in practice if not in law. The need for intense involvement on the part of both partners is also why a dyad can have no "free riders," or partners who benefit from the relationship without contributing to it. Finally, in a dyadic relationship, the partners must assume full responsibility for all that transpires. Neither partner can shift responsibility to some larger collectivity because no larger collectivity exists beyond the relationship between the two partners.

In contrast, when a third person enters the picture, thereby creating a triad, relationships tend to be less intimate and intense. Equally significantly, the triad restricts individuality by allowing one partner to be constrained for the collective good. This situation occurs when a majority outvotes one partner. The existence of a triad also allows the formation of coalitions or factions. Furthermore, a triad allows one partner to mediate conflict between the other two, exploit rivalry between the other two, or encourage rivalry between the other two to achieve dominance. Thus, the introduction of a third partner makes possible a completely new set of social dynamics that are structurally impossible in a dyadic relationship.



Characteristics of the dyad:
1. Both partners are intensely absorbed in the relationship
2. The dyad needs both partners to live but only one to die.
3. No "free riders" are possible.
4. Neither partner can deny responsibility by shifting it to a larger collectivity.

Characteristics of the triad:
1. Intensity and intimacy are reduced.
2. The triad restricts individuality by allowing a partner to be constrained for the collective good. A partner may be outvoted by a majority, for example.
3. Coalitions are possible
4. Third-party mediation of conflict between two partners is possible
5. Third-party exploitation of rivalry between two partners is possible.
6. A third-party divide-and-conquer strategy is possible.
7. "Free riders" are possible
8. It is possible to shift responsibility to the larger collectivity

FIGURE 6.2
Dyad and Triad

Time for Review

- Why are any two strangers connected by just a few social links?
- How can weak ties yield strong results when searching for a job?
- When the scale of a network increases from two to three nodes, what new possibilities for social interaction emerge?

Is Group Loyalty Always Functional?

Love and Group Loyalty

Intensity and intimacy characterize many dyadic relationships. However, outside forces can destroy these relationships. For instance, the star-crossed lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* are torn between their love for each other and their loyalty to the feuding Montague and Capulet families. In the end, Romeo and Juliet die, victims of the feud.

Love thwarted by conflicting group loyalty is the stuff of many tragic plays, novels, and movies. Most audiences have no problem grasping that group loyalty is often more powerful than romantic love. However, it is unclear why group loyalty holds such power over us. Also unclear is whether the power of group loyalty is always beneficial, as functionalists are inclined to argue. Before delving into the insights that the sociological study of groups offers on these issues, it will prove useful to define a few terms.

A **social group** comprises one or more networks of people who identify with one another and adhere to defined norms, roles, and statuses.

A **social category** comprises people who share a similar status but do not identify with one another.

In **primary groups,** norms, roles, and statuses are agreed on but are not put into writing. Social interaction leads to strong emotional ties. It extends over a long period and involves a wide range of activities. It results in group members knowing one another well.

Secondary groups are larger and more impersonal than primary groups are. Compared with primary groups, social interaction in secondary groups creates weaker emotional ties. The interaction extends over a shorter period, and it involves a narrow range of activities. It results in most group members having at most a passing acquaintance with one another.

Primary and Secondary Groups

Social groups are made up of one or more networks of people who identify with one another, interact on a regular basis, and adhere to specific norms, roles, and statuses. Sociologists distinguish social groups from **social categories**, which consist of people who share a similar status but do not identify with one another. Coffee drinkers form a social category. They do not normally share norms and identify with one another. In contrast, members of a family, sports team, or university are aware of shared membership. They think of themselves as members of a collectivity and routinely interact. They form groups.

Although many kinds of social groups exist, sociologists often distinguish between primary and secondary groups. In **primary groups**, members agree on norms, roles, and statuses but do not define them in writing. Social interaction creates strong emotional ties, extends over a long period, and involves a wide range of activities. As a result, group members know one another well. The family is the most important primary group.

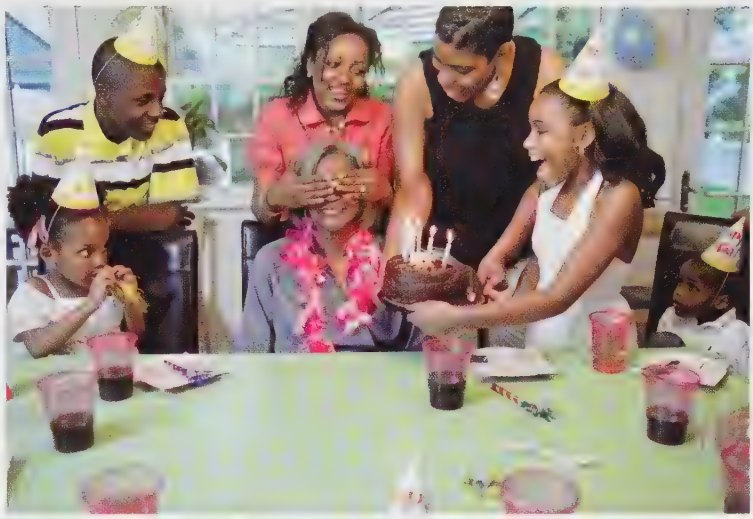
Secondary groups are larger and more impersonal than primary groups are. They involve weak emotional ties that extend over a short period and involve a narrow range of activities. Most secondary group members have at most a passing acquaintance with one another. Your sociology class is an example of a secondary group.

Keeping these distinctions in mind, we can begin to explore how groups ensure conformity.

Benefits of Group Conformity

Television's first reality TV show was *Candid Camera*. On an early episode, an unsuspecting man waited for an elevator. When the elevator door opened, he found four people, all confederates of the show, facing the elevator's back wall. Seeing the four people with their backs to him, the man at first hesitated. He then tentatively entered the elevator. However, rather than turning around so he would face the door, he remained facing the back wall, just like the others. The scene was repeated several times. Men and women, Black and White, all acted the same way. Confronting unanimously bizarre behaviour, they chose conformity over common sense.

Conformity is an integral part of group life, and primary groups generate more pressure to conform than do secondary groups. Strong social ties create emotional intimacy. They also ensure that primary group members share similar attitudes, beliefs, and information. Beyond the family, friendship groups (or cliques) and gangs demonstrate these features. Conformity ensures group cohesion.



David Sacks/Thinkstock

The main primary group is the family, which is an enduring, multifunctional social unit characterized by unwritten consensus concerning norms, roles and statuses, emotional intensity, and intimacy.

A classic study of soldiers in World War II demonstrates the power of conformity to get people to face extreme danger. Samuel Stouffer and his colleagues (1949) showed that primary group cohesion was the main factor motivating soldiers to engage in combat. Rather than belief in a cause, such as upholding liberty or fighting the evils of Nazism, the feeling of camaraderie, loyalty, and solidarity with fellow soldiers supplied the principal motivation to face danger. Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall (1947: 160–61) famously wrote: "A man fights to help the man next to him. … Men do not fight for a cause but because they do not want to let their comrades down." It follows that if you want to create a great military force, you need to promote group solidarity and identity—which explains the importance of wearing uniforms, singing anthems, displaying insignia, hoisting flags, conducting drills, training under duress, and instilling hatred of the enemy.

Similar processes operate in everyday life. If you draw a map of students seated in your high school, college, or university cafeteria, you'll probably be able to name the cliques using ethnic, class, fashion, intellectual, and other labels. Group members tend to dress and act alike, use the same slang, like and dislike the same kind of music, and demand loyalty, especially when they encounter an external threat. All groups demand conformity and, to varying degrees, they get it, although, of course, group loyalties may change with changing social circumstances.

THE ASCH EXPERIMENT

Another example of how group pressure creates conformity is social psychologist Solomon Asch's famous experiment (Asch, 1955). Asch worked with a group of seven men. One was the experimental subject while the other six were Asch's confederates. Asch showed the men a card with a line drawn on it, and then showed the group a second card with three lines of varying length drawn on it (see Figure 6.3). One by one, he asked the confederates to judge which line on card 2 was the same length as the line on card 1. The answer was obvious, since one line on card 2 was much shorter than the line on card 1, one was much longer, and one was exactly the same length. However, as Asch had instructed, all six confederates said that either the shorter or the longer line was the

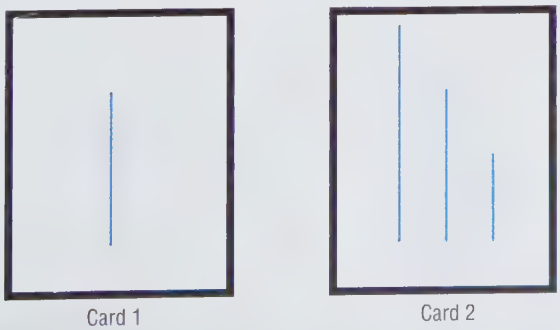


FIGURE 6.3
The Asch Experiment

same length as the line on card 1. Then the experimental subject made his judgment. He typically overruled his own perception and agreed with the majority. In fact, only 25 percent of Asch's experimental subjects consistently gave the right answer. Asch thus demonstrated how easily an individual will conform to group pressure and ignore individual beliefs.

Asch's work and subsequent research show that several factors affect the likelihood of conformity (Sternberg, 1998: 499–500). First, the likelihood of conformity increases as *group size* increases to three or four members. For groups larger than four, the likelihood of conformity generally does not increase. Second, as *group cohesiveness* increases, so does the likelihood of conformity. Where greater intimacy and sharing of values occur, group members are less likely to express dissent. Third, *social status* affects the likelihood of conformity. People with low status in a group (e.g., because of their gender or race) are less likely to dissent than are people with high status. Fourth, *culture* matters. People in individualistic societies, like Canada, tend to conform less than do people in collectivist societies, like China. Fifth, the *appearance of unanimity* affects the likelihood of conformity. Even one dissenting voice greatly increases the chance that others will dissent.

Disadvantages of Group Conformity

GROUPTHINK AND BYSTANDER APATHY

As functionalists note, the power of groups to ensure conformity is often a valuable asset. Armies could not operate without willingness to undergo personal sacrifice for the good of the group, nor could sports teams excel. However, there can be negative consequences to being a good team player because a group's common view can sometimes be misguided or dangerous. Although disagreement might save the group from making mistakes, the pressure to conform despite individual doubts—sometimes called **groupthink**—can result in catastrophe (Janis, 1972).

Groupthink is group pressure to conform despite individual misgivings.

The dangers of groupthink are greatest in high-stress situations. For example, groupthink occurred in high-level meetings before the space shuttle *Columbia* disaster in 2003. Transcripts from those meetings indicate that the NASA official who ran the shuttle management meetings, a non-engineer, dismissed an engineer's concerns that foam insulation debris could harm the spacecraft. The manager cut off discussion, and the others at the meeting quickly followed suit (Wald and Schwartz, 2003). A few days later, damage from foam insulation debris caused *Columbia* to break apart upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere. Seven astronauts died.

Bystander apathy occurs when people observe someone in an emergency but offer no help.

The concept of **bystander apathy** is related to the idea of groupthink. Bystander apathy occurs when people observe someone in an emergency but offer no help. One case that attracted worldwide attention in 2011 involved a two-year-old toddler in Foshan, China, who was seriously injured when she wandered into the path of a van. Surveillance footage shows that the driver did not stop. A truck then drove over her a second time. Again, the driver did not stop. More than a dozen people subsequently turned a blind eye when they walked by the critically injured child. Finally, a trash collector pulled her off the road and managed to track down her mother. The child later died in hospital (you can see a video of this tragic incident at http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xlu9ov). Studies of bystander apathy suggest that, in general, as the number of bystanders increases, the likelihood of any one bystander helping another decreases because the greater the number of bystanders, the less responsibility any one individual feels. This behaviour shows that people usually take their cues for action from others and again demonstrates the power of groups over individuals.

Group Conformity, Group Conflict, and Group Inequality

Functionalists often emphasize the benefits of group conformity. They are inclined to overlook the ways in which conflict within groups can avert disaster. By emphasizing the

benefits of group conformity, functionalists are also inclined to ignore the ways in which group conformity encourages conflict and reinforces inequality.

If a group exists, it follows that some people must not belong to it. Accordingly, sociologists distinguish **in-group members** (those who belong) from **out-group members** (those who do not). Members of an in-group typically draw a boundary separating themselves from members of the out-group and they try to keep out-group members from crossing the line. Anyone who has gone to high school knows all about in-groups and out-groups. They have seen first-hand how race, class, athletic ability, academic talent, and physical attractiveness act as boundaries separating groups.

In-group members are people who belong to a group.

Out-group members are people who are excluded from an in-group.

GROUP BOUNDARIES: COMPETITION AND SELF-ESTEEM

Why do group boundaries crystallize? One theory is that group boundaries emerge when people compete for scarce resources. For example, old immigrants may greet new immigrants with hostility if the latter are seen as competitors for scarce jobs (Levine and Campbell, 1972). Another theory is that group boundaries emerge when people are motivated to protect their self-esteem. From this point of view, drawing group boundaries allows people to increase their self-esteem by believing that out-groups have low status (Tajfel, 1981).

The classic experiment on prejudice, the Robber's Cave Study (Sherif et al., 1988 [1961]), supports both theories. Researchers brought two groups of 11-year-old boys who were strangers to one another to a summer camp at Robber's Cave State Park in Oklahoma in 1954. The two groups were kept apart for about a week while the boys swam, camped, and hiked. Each group chose a name for itself, which the boys printed on caps and T-shirts. Then a series of athletic competitions was set up between the two groups. The two groups quickly became antagonistic toward each other, holding the other group in low esteem. The boys vandalized the other group's cabins, conducted food fights, and stole from each other. The boys quickly created strict group boundaries during these competitive conditions.

The investigators next created several emergency scenarios whose solution required cooperation between the two groups. One of the emergencies involved inspecting the pipe supplying water to the camp and fixing a leak. The researchers assigned the boys to teams that included members from *both* groups. After cooperating with each other to solve the problem, the boys began playing together without fighting. Once cooperation replaced competition and the groups stopped holding each other in low esteem, group boundaries melted away as quickly as they had formed.

It is important to keep in mind that the two groups involved in this experiment were of equal status: They were all White, middle class, and 11 years old. In addition, their face-to-face interactions with each other occurred in a setting where the norms established by the investigators encouraged a reduction of group prejudice. Today, social scientists understand that similar conditions must be in place before the boundaries between an in-group and an out-group fade (Sternberg, 1998: 512).

Natural or artificial boundaries—rivers, mountains, highways, railway tracks—typically separate groups or communities.

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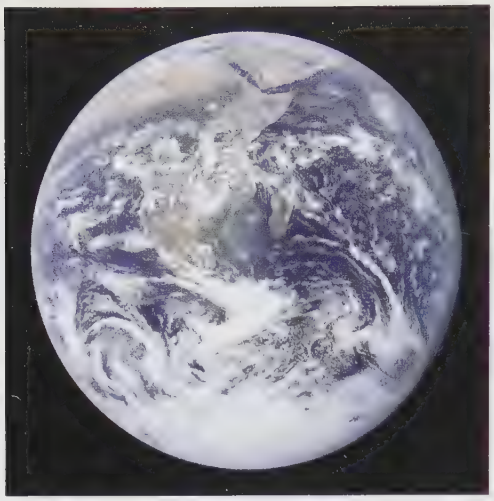
DOMINANT GROUPS

The boundaries separating groups often seem unchangeable and even "natural." In general, however, dominant groups construct group boundaries in particular circumstances to further their goals (Barth, 1969; Tajfel, 1981). Consider Germans and Jews. By the early twentieth century, Jews were well integrated into German society. They were economically successful, culturally innovative, and politically influential, and many of them considered themselves more German than Jewish. In 1933, the year Hitler seized power, 44 percent of marriages involving at least one German Jew were marriages to a non-Jew. In addition,



JPL/NASA

Is it possible to imagine everyone in the world as a community? Why, or why not? Under what conditions might it be possible?

some German Jews converted before marrying non-Jewish Germans (Gordon, 1984). Yet, although the boundary separating Germans from Jews was quite weak, the Nazis chose to redraw and reinforce it. Defining a Jew as anyone who had at least one Jewish grandparent, the Nazis passed a series of anti-Jewish laws and, in the end, systematically slaughtered the Jews of Europe. The division between Germans and Jews was not "natural." It came into existence because of its perceived usefulness to a dominant group.

We conclude that both the functionalist and conflict perspectives contribute much to our appreciation of how social groups operate. By emphasizing the benefits of group conformity, functionalists increase our understanding of the means by which individuals are mobilized to achieve group goals. In contrast, conflict theorists caution us to recognize that too much conformity can be dangerous: Failure to dissent can have disastrous consequences and high levels of group conformity often reinforce group inequality.

Groups and Social Imagination

In concluding this section, we note that group interaction is not always face to face. Often, people interact with other group members in their imagination.

Consider **reference groups**, which are composed of people against whom individuals evaluate their own situation or conduct. Members of a reference group function as role models. Although reference groups represent a largely imaginary ideal, they may still influence us. For instance, many people try to imitate body ideals that the advertising industry promotes, even though most people are aware that very few people can look like a runway model.

Reference groups comprise people against whom individuals evaluate their own situation or conduct.

We need to exercise our imaginations vigorously to participate in the group life of a society like ours, because much social life in a complex society involves belonging to secondary groups without knowing or interacting with most group members. It is impossible for an individual to interact with any more than a small fraction of the more than 38 million people living in this country. Nonetheless, most Canadians feel a strong emotional bond to other Canadians. Similarly, think about the employees and students at your college or university. They know they belong to the same secondary group and many of them are probably loyal to it. Yet how many people at your school have you met? Probably no more than a small fraction of the total. One way to make sense of the paradox of intimacy despite distance is to think of your postsecondary institution and Canada as "imagined communities." They are imagined because you cannot possibly meet most members of the group and can only speculate about what they must be like. They are, nonetheless, communities because people believe strongly in their existence and importance (Anderson, 1991).

Time for Review

- How is conformity to group norms useful?
- How is conformity to group norms dangerous?
- How can conformity to group norms increase or reinforce social inequality?

Bureaucracies

Bureaucratic Inefficiency

Formal organizations are secondary groups created to achieve particular objectives. The most common and influential formal organizations are bureaucracies. Let us now examine these often frustrating but necessary organizational forms.

Formal organizations are secondary groups designed to achieve explicit objectives.

As mentioned earlier, Weber regarded bureaucracies as the most efficient type of secondary group. This view contrasts with conventional wisdom. When most people think "bureaucracy," they imagine bored clerks sitting in small cubicles creating endless trails of red tape that generate needless waste and much frustration. Thinking of bureaucracies as efficient organizations may therefore seem unusual.

How can we balance the reality of bureaucratic inefficiencies with Weber's view that bureaucracies are the most efficient type of secondary group? First, we must recognize that Weber was comparing bureaucracies with "traditional" and "charismatic" forms of organizations. These older organizational forms operated on the basis of either traditional practice ("We do it this way because we've always done it this way") or the charisma of their leaders ("We do it this way because our chief inspires us to do it this way"). Bureaucracies *are* generally more efficient when compared with these "traditional" and "charismatic" forms of organizations. Second, we must recognize that Weber thought bureaucracies operated efficiently only in ideal situations. He understood that in the real world, bureaucracies vary greatly in terms of efficiency, and he wrote extensively about that. Because of variation in efficiency, it makes less sense to characterize bureaucracies as either efficient or inefficient than to consider what makes bureaucracies work well or poorly.

Traditionally, sociologists have lodged four main criticisms against bureaucracies. First is the problem of **dehumanization**. Rather than treating clients and personnel as people with unique needs, bureaucracies sometimes treat clients as standard cases and personnel as cogs in a giant machine. This treatment frustrates clients and lowers worker morale. Second is the problem of **bureaucratic ritualism** (Merton, 1968 [1949]). Bureaucrats sometimes become so preoccupied with rules and regulations that they make it difficult for the organization to fulfill its goals. Third is the problem of **oligarchy**, or "rule of the few" (Michels, 1949 [1911]). Some sociologists have argued that in all bureaucracies, power tends to become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few people at the top of the organizational pyramid. This tendency is particularly problematic in political organizations because it hinders democracy and renders leaders unaccountable to the public. Fourth is the problem of **bureaucratic inertia**. Bureaucracies are sometimes so large and rigid that they lose touch with reality and continue their policies even when their clients' needs change.

Two main factors underlie bureaucratic inefficiency: size and social structure. Consider size first. The larger the bureaucracy, the more difficult it is for functionaries to communicate. In addition, rivalries and coalitions form more easily in bigger bureaucracies. As Figure 6.4 shows, only one dyadic relationship can exist between two people, whereas three dyadic relationships can exist among three people and six dyadic relationships among four people.

Dehumanization occurs when bureaucracies treat clients as standard cases and personnel as cogs in a giant machine. This treatment frustrates clients and lowers worker morale.

Bureaucratic ritualism involves bureaucrats becoming so preoccupied with rules and regulations that they make it difficult for the organization to fulfill its goals.

Oligarchy means "rule of the few." All bureaucracies have a supposed tendency for power to become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few people at the top of the organizational pyramid.

Bureaucratic inertia refers to the tendency of large, rigid bureaucracies to continue their policies even when their clients' needs change.

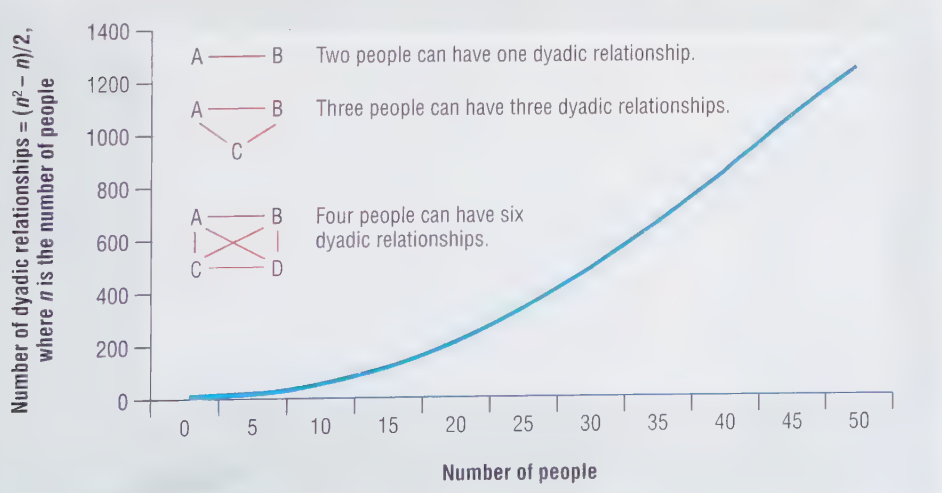
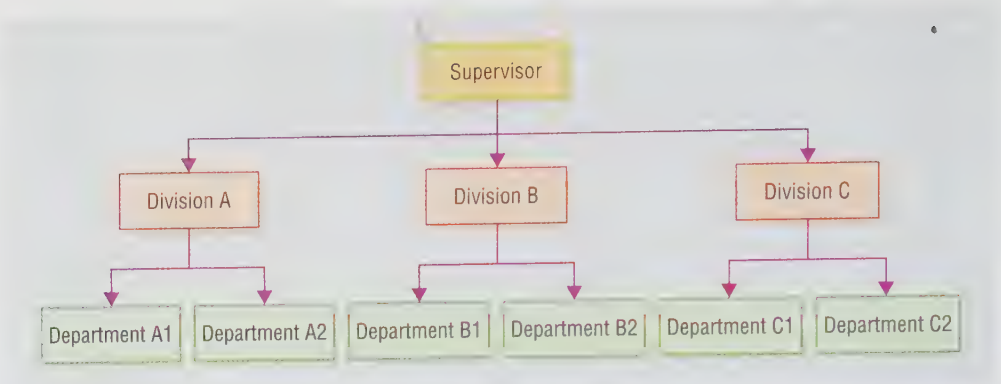


FIGURE 6.4
Number of Possible Dyadic Relationships by Number of People in a Group

FIGURE 6.5
Bureaucratic Structure



The number of potential dyadic relationships increases exponentially with the number of people. Hence, 300 dyadic relationships are possible among 25 people and 1225 dyadic relationships are possible among 50 people. The possibility of clique formation, rivalries, conflict, and miscommunication rises as quickly as the number of possible dyadic social relationships in an organization.

The second factor underlying bureaucratic inefficiency is social structure. Figure 6.5 shows a typical bureaucratic structure: a hierarchy. In this bureaucracy, the supervisor is at the top of the organization, with three divisions below the supervisor and six departments below the divisions. Power increases as you move up the hierarchy. In addition, lines of communication join the various bureaucratic units: Departments report only to their divisions, and divisions report only to the supervisor.

Communication usually becomes more difficult as the number of levels in a bureaucratic structure increase. With more levels, people must communicate indirectly through department and division heads, rather than directly with each other. Consequently, information may be lost, blocked, reinterpreted, or distorted as it moves up the hierarchy. In addition, top levels in the hierarchy may become overwhelmed with paperwork because of an excess of information that prevents them from clearly seeing the needs of the organization and its clients. Bureaucratic heads may therefore have only a vague and imprecise idea of what is happening "on the ground" (Wilensky, 1967).

When lines of communication directly joining departments or divisions are weak or nonexistent, information may be lost, blocked, reinterpreted, or distorted. For example, as the lines joining units in Figure 6.4 suggest, even though Department A1 may have information that could help Department B1 do its job better, A1 may have to communicate that information indirectly through the division level. Thus, just as people who have authority may lack information, people who have information may lack the authority to act on it directly (Crozier, 1964 [1963]).

Later in the chapter, we consider some ways of overcoming bureaucratic inefficiency. As you will see, these solutions typically involve establishing patterns of social relations that flatten the bureaucratic hierarchy and cut across the sort of bureaucratic rigidities illustrated in Figure 6.5. As a useful prelude to this discussion, we first note some shortcomings of Weber's analysis of bureaucracy. Weber tended to ignore both bureaucracy's informal side and the role of leadership in influencing bureaucratic performance. Yet, as you will learn, it is precisely by paying attention to such issues that we can make bureaucracies more efficient.

Bureaucracy's Informal Side

Weber was concerned mainly with the formal structure or chain of command in a bureaucracy. He paid little attention to the social networks that underlie the chain of command.

Evidence for the existence of social networks and their importance in the operation of bureaucracies date back to the 1930s. Officials at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company near Chicago wanted to see how various aspects of the work environment

affected productivity. They sent social scientists in to investigate. Among other things, researchers found that workers in one section of the plant had established a norm for daily output. Workers who failed to meet the norm were helped by co-workers until their output increased. Workers who exceeded the norm were chided by co-workers until their productivity fell. Company officials and researchers previously had regarded employees merely as individuals who worked as hard or as little as they could in response to wage levels and work conditions. However, the Hawthorne study showed that employees are members of social networks that regulate output (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939).

In the 1970s, Rosabeth Moss Kanter conducted another landmark study of informal social relations in bureaucracies (Kanter, 1977). Kanter studied a corporation in which most women were sales agents. They were locked out of managerial positions. However, she did not find that the corporation discriminated against women as a matter of policy. She did find a male-only social network whose members shared gossip, went drinking, and told sexist jokes. The cost of being excluded from the network was high: To achieve good raises and promotions, a person needed to be accepted as "one of the boys" and be sponsored by a male executive, which was impossible for women. Thus, despite a company policy that did not discriminate against women, an informal network of social relations ensured that the company discriminated against women in practice.

Despite their overt commitment to impersonality and written rules, bureaucracies rely profoundly on informal interaction to get the job done (Barnard, 1938; Blau, 1963). This fact is true even at the highest levels. For example, executives usually decide important matters in face-to-face meetings, not in writing or via the phone. That is because people feel more comfortable in intimate settings, where they can get to know "the whole person." Meeting face to face, people can use their verbal and nonverbal interaction skills to gauge other people's trustworthiness. Socializing—talking over dinner, for example—is an important part of any business because the establishment of trust lies at the heart of all social interactions that require cooperation (Gambetta, 1988).

The informal side of bureaucracy operates at lower levels, too. For instance, while on the job, some office workers take time to text or email their colleagues and friends. Some analysts believe this kind of behaviour is dysfunctional, as it lowers office productivity. Others think it is functional. It gives workers a chance to communicate quickly and easily with colleagues about matters of importance to the workplace. It also allows them to step out of their routine by, say, sharing a joke and then return to their work refreshed. Over time, such behaviour can strengthen friendship ties. The line between functional and dysfunctional informal communication seems to depend on how much and what kind of chatter takes place. Too much chatter unrelated to work may indeed hamper productivity but, within limits, communication via the informal side of bureaucracy seems to be beneficial.

Laissez-faire leadership allows subordinates to work things out largely on their own, with almost no direction from above. It is the least effective type of leadership.

Leadership

Apart from overlooking the role of informal relations in the operation of bureaucracies, Weber also paid insufficient attention to the issue of leadership. Weber thought the formal structure of a bureaucracy largely determines how it operates. However, sociologists now realize that leadership style also has a significant bearing on bureaucratic performance (Barnard, 1938; Ridgeway, 1983).

Research shows that the least effective leader is the one who allows subordinates to work things out largely on their own, with almost no direction from above. This leadership style is known as **laissez-faire leadership**, from the French expression "let them do." Note, however, that laissez-faire leadership can be effective under some circumstances. It works best when group members

Phil Date/Shutterstock

Informal interaction is common even in highly bureaucratic organizations. A water cooler, for example, can be a place for exchanging information and gossip, and even a place for decision making.

are highly experienced, trained, motivated, and educated, and when trust and confidence in group members are high. In such conditions, a strong leader is not really needed for the group to accomplish its goals. At the other extreme is **authoritarian leadership**. Authoritarian leaders demand strict compliance from subordinates. They are most effective in a crisis, such as a war or the emergency room of a hospital. They may earn grudging respect from subordinates for achieving the group's goals in the face of difficult circumstances, but they rarely win popularity contests. **Democratic leadership** offers more guidance than the laissez-faire variety but less control than the authoritarian type. Democratic leaders try to include all group members in the decision-making process, taking the best ideas from the group and moulding them into a strategy that all can identify with. Except during crisis situations, democratic leadership is usually the most effective leadership style.

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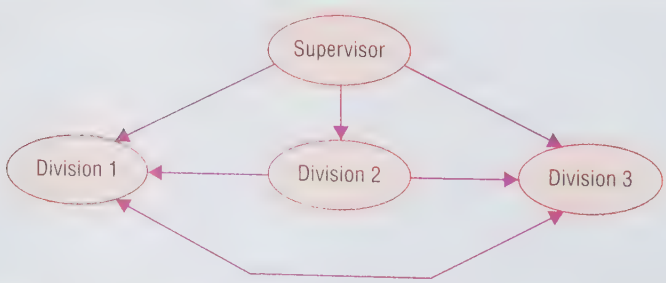
In sum, contemporary researchers have modified Weber's characterization of bureaucracy in two main ways. First, they have stressed the importance of informal social networks in shaping bureaucratic operations. Second, they have shown that democratic leaders are most effective in non-crisis situations because they tend to widely distribute decision-making authority and rewards. As you will now see, these lessons are important when it comes to thinking about how to make bureaucracies more efficient.

Overcoming Bureaucratic Inefficiency

Large bureaucratic organizations are often unable to compete against smaller, innovative firms, particularly in rapidly changing sectors of the economy (Burns and Stalker, 1961). In part, this situation occurs because innovative firms tend to have flatter and more democratic organizational structures, as illustrated in Figure 6.6. When comparing the flat network structure in Figure 6.6 with the traditional bureaucratic structure in Figure 6.5, it is clear that the network structure has fewer levels. Moreover, the network structures communication so that all units are directly linked. In contrast, information flows only upward in the traditional bureaucratic structure.

Much evidence indicates that workers tend to be more satisfied, clients tend to be happier, and profits tend to be larger in flatter bureaucracies with decentralized decision making and multiple lines of communication (Kanter, 1989). Companies from Sweden and Japan were at the forefront of this bureaucratic innovation beginning in the early 1970s. Corporations such as Volvo and Toyota began eliminating middle-management positions and allowing worker participation in a variety of tasks related to their main functions. They allowed small autonomous teams of workers to make many decisions themselves, forming "quality circles" of workers to monitor and correct defects in products and services. These changes led to improvements in product quality, worker morale, and profitability. Today, these ideas have moved far beyond the Swedish and Japanese automobile industry and can be seen in many large North American companies. Companies outside the manufacturing sector have introduced similar bureaucratic reforms, again with positive results.

FIGURE 6.6
Network Structure



Time for Review

- What does it mean when we talk about the efficiency of an organization?
- Compared with what kinds of organizations are bureaucracies considered to be efficient?
- What kinds of bureaucracies are relatively inefficient?

Societies

In the preceding pages, we sought to explain various types of human behaviour by focusing on the social psychology of networks, groups, and bureaucracies. Now, we add that these forms of social organization are embedded in **societies**, large collectivities of interacting people who share a culture and, usually, a territory. Like the smaller collectivities we have analyzed so far, societies help shape human action. They influence the kind of work we do and how productively we work. They mould patterns of class, gender, racial, and ethnic inequality. They impinge on the way religious, family, and other institutions operate. They affect the way we govern and the way we think of ourselves.

Societies are collectivities of interacting people who share a culture and, usually, a territory.

Despite the pervasiveness of these influences, most people are blind to them. We tend to believe that we are free to do what we want. Yet the plain fact is that societies affect even our most personal and intimate choices. For example, deciding how many children to have is one of the most intensely private and emotional issues a woman or a couple must face. So why is it that tens of millions of women and couples have decided in the space of just a few decades to have an average of two babies instead of six? Why do so many individuals make almost exactly the same private decision at almost precisely the same historical moment? The answer is that certain identifiable social conditions prompt them to reach the same conclusion, in this case to have fewer or more babies. And so it is with most decisions: Identifiable social conditions increase the chance that we will choose one course of action over another.

The relationship between people and nature is the most basic determinant of how societies are structured and therefore how people's choices are constrained. Accordingly, researchers have identified six stages of human evolution, each characterized by a shift in the relationship between people and nature. As we review each of these stages, note what happens to the human–nature relationship: With each successive stage, people are less at the mercy of nature and thus transform it more radically. The changing relationship between people and nature has huge implications for all aspects of social life. Let us identify these implications as we sketch the evolution of human society in bold strokes.

Foraging Societies

Until about 10 000 years ago, all people lived in **foraging societies**. They sustained themselves by searching for wild plants and hunting wild animals (Lenski, Nolan, and Lenski, 1995; O'Neil, 2004; Sahlins, 1972). They depended on nature passively, taking whatever it made available and transforming it only slightly to meet their needs. They built simple tools, such as baskets, bows and arrows, spears, and digging sticks. They sometimes burned grasslands to encourage the growth of new vegetation and attract game, but they neither planted crops nor domesticated many animals.

In **foraging societies**, people live by searching for wild plants and hunting wild animals. Such societies predominated until about 10 000 years ago. Inequality, the division of labour, productivity, and settlement size are very low in such societies.

Most foragers lived in temporary encampments, and when food was scarce, they migrated to more bountiful regions. Harsh environments could support one person per 25 to 130 square kilometres. Rich environments could support 25 to 80 people per square kilometre. Foraging communities or bands averaged about 25 to 30 people but could be as large as 100 people. *Aquatic foragers,* such as those on the western coast of North America, concentrated on fishing and hunting marine mammals. *Equestrian foragers,* such as the Great Plains Indigenous peoples of North America, hunted large mammals from horseback.

© Corel

Aquatic foragers had much leisure time to invest in ornamentation, suggesting that their lives were by no means a constant struggle for survival.

Pedestrian foragers engaged in diversified hunting and gathering on foot and could be found on all continents.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, most social scientists thought that foragers lived brief, grim lives. In their view, foragers were engaged in a desperate struggle for existence that was typically cut short by disease, starvation, pestilence, or some other force of nature. We now know that this characterization says more about the biases of early anthropologists than about the lives foragers actually lived. Consider the !Kung of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa, who maintained their traditional way of life until the 1960s (Lee, 1979). Young !Kung did not fully join the workforce until they reached the age of 20. Adults worked only about 15 hours a week. Mainly because of disease, children faced a much smaller chance of surviving childhood than is the case in contemporary society, but about 10 percent of the !Kung were older than 60, the same percentage as Canadians in the early 1970s. It thus seems that the !Kung who survived childhood lived relatively long, secure, leisurely, healthy, and happy lives. They were not unique. The tall totem poles, ornate wood carvings, colourful masks, and elaborate clothing of the Kwakiutl on Vancouver Island serve as beautiful reminders that many foragers had the leisure time to invest considerable energy in ornamentation.

Equestrian foragers were hierarchical, male-dominated, and warlike, especially after they acquired rifles in the nineteenth century. However, the social structure of pedestrian foragers—the great majority of all foragers—was remarkably non-hierarchical. They shared what little wealth they had, and women and men enjoyed approximately equal status.

Pastoral and Horticultural Societies

Substantial social inequality became widespread about 10 000 years ago, when some bands began to domesticate various wild plants and animals, especially cattle, camels, pigs, goats, sheep, horses, and reindeer (Lenski, Nolan, and Lenski, 1995; O'Neil, 2004). By using hand tools to garden in highly fertile areas (**horticultural societies**) and herding animals in more arid areas (**pastoral societies**), people increased the food supply and made it more dependable. Nature could now support more people. Moreover, pastoral and horticultural societies enabled fewer people to specialize in producing food and more people to specialize in constructing tools and weapons, making clothing and jewellery, and trading valuable objects with other bands. Some families and bands accumulated more domesticated animals, cropland, and valued objects than others did. As a result, pastoral and horticultural societies developed a higher level of social inequality than was evident in most foraging societies.

Horticultural societies are societies in which people domesticate plants and use simple hand tools to garden. Such societies first emerged about 10 000 years ago.

Pastoral societies are societies in which people domesticate cattle, camels, pigs, goats, sheep, horses, and reindeer. Such societies first emerged about 10 000 years ago.

As wealth accumulated, feuding and warfare grew, particularly among pastoralists. Men who controlled large herds of animals and conducted successful predatory raids acquired much prestige and power and came to be recognized as chiefs. Some chiefs formed large, fierce, mobile armies. The Mongols and the Zulus were horse pastoralists who conquered large parts of Asia and Africa, respectively.

Most pastoralists were nomadic, with migration patterns dictated by their animals' needs for food and water. Some pastoralists migrated regularly from the same cool highlands in the summer to the same warm lowland valleys in the winter and were able to establish villages in both locations. Horticulturalists often established permanent settlements beside their croplands. These settlements might include several hundred people. However, the development of large permanent settlements, including the first cities, took place only with the development of intensive agriculture.

Agricultural Societies

Especially in the fertile river valleys of the Middle East, India, China, and South America, human populations flourished—so much so that, about 5000 years ago, they could no longer be sustained by pastoral and horticulture techniques. It was then that **agricultural societies** originated. The plow was invented to harness animal power for more intensive and efficient agricultural production. The plow allowed farmers to plant crops over much larger areas and dig below the topsoil, bringing nutrients to the surface and thus increasing yield (Lenski, Nolan, and Lenski, 1995; O'Neil, 2004).

flybird163/123RF.com

An Asian farmer plows with the aid of a water buffalo.

Because the source of food was immobile, many people built permanent settlements, and because people were able to produce considerably more food than was necessary for their own subsistence, surpluses were sold in village markets. Some of these centres became towns and then cities, home to rulers, religious figures, soldiers, craft workers, and government officials. The population of some agricultural societies numbered in the millions.

Agricultural societies are societies in which plows and animal power are used to substantially increase food supply and dependability as compared with horticultural and pastoral societies. Agricultural societies first emerged about 5000 years ago.

The crystallization of the idea of private property was one of the most significant developments of the era. Among pedestrian foragers, there was no private ownership of land or water. Among horticulturalists, particular families might be recognized as having rights to some property, but only while they were using it. If the property was not in use, they were obliged to share it or give it to a family that needed it. In contrast, in societies that practised intensive agriculture, powerful individuals succeeded in having the idea of individual property rights legally recognized. It was now possible for people to buy land and water, to call them their own, and to transmit ownership to their offspring. People could become rich and, through inheritance, make their children rich.

Ancient civilizations thus became rigidly divided into classes. Royalty surrounded itself with loyal landowners, protected itself with professional soldiers, and justified its rule with the help of priests, whose job, in part, was to convince ordinary peasants that the existing social order was God's will. Government officials collected taxes and religious officials collected tithes, thus enriching the upper classes with the peasantry's surplus production. In this era, inequality between women and men also reached its historical high point (Boulding, 1976).

Industrial Societies

Stimulated by international exploration, trade, and commerce, the Industrial Revolution began in Britain in the 1780s. A century later, it had spread to all of Western Europe, North America, Japan, and Russia. Industry required the use of fuel—at first, waterpower and steam—to drive machines and thereby greatly increase productivity, as measured by the quantity of goods that could be produced with a given amount of effort.

If you have ever read a Charles Dickens novel, such as *Oliver Twist*, you know that hellish working conditions and deep social inequalities characterized early **industrial societies**. Work in factories and mines became so productive that owners amassed previously unimaginable fortunes, but ordinary labourers worked 16-hour days in dangerous conditions and earned barely enough to survive. They struggled for the right to form and join unions and expand the vote to all adult citizens, hoping to use union power and political influence to improve their working and living conditions. At the same time, new technologies and ways of organizing work made it possible to produce ever more goods at a lower cost per unit. The increase in productivity made it possible to meet many of the workers' demands and raise living standards for the entire population.

Industrial societies are societies that use machines and fuel to greatly increase the supply and dependability of food and finished goods. The first such society emerged in Great Britain in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Increasingly, businesses required a literate, numerate, and highly trained workforce. To raise profits, they were eager to identify and hire the most talented people. They encouraged everyone to develop their talents and rewarded them for doing so by paying higher salaries. Inequality between women and men began to decrease because of the demand for talent and women's struggles to enter the paid workforce on an equal footing with men. Why hire an incompetent man over a competent woman when you can profit more from the services of a capable employee? Put in this way, women's demands for equality made good business sense. For all these reasons, class and gender inequality declined as industrial societies matured.

Postindustrial Societies

In the early 1970s, sociologist Daniel Bell (1973) argued that industrial society was rapidly becoming a thing of the past. According to Bell, just as agriculture gave way to manufacturing as the driving force of the economy in the nineteenth century, so did manufacturing give way to service industries by the mid-twentieth century, resulting in the birth of **postindustrial societies**.

Postindustrial societies are societies in which most workers are employed in the service sector and computers spur substantial increases in the division of labour and productivity. Shortly after World War II, the United States became the first postindustrial society.

Even in pre-agricultural societies, a few individuals specialized in providing services rather than producing goods. For example, a person considered adept at tending to the ill, forecasting the weather, or predicting the movement of animals might be relieved of hunting responsibilities to focus on these services. However, such jobs were rare because productivity was low. Nearly everyone needed to contribute physical work for the tribe to survive. Even in early agricultural societies, 80 to 100 farmers were needed to support one non-farmer (Hodson and Sullivan, 1995: 10). Only at the beginning of the nineteenth century in industrialized countries did productivity increase to the point where a quarter of the labour force could be employed in services. Today, more than three-quarters of Canadian workers are in the service sector.

In postindustrial societies, women have been recruited to the service sector in disproportionately large numbers, which has helped to ensure a gradual increase in equality between women and men in terms of education, income, and other indicators of rank (Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification). But the picture with respect to inequality between classes is more complex. Most postindustrial societies, and especially the United States, have experienced large increases in class inequality in recent decades. Other postindustrial societies, such as Canada, have experienced smaller increases. A few postindustrial societies, such as France, had less inequality in 2000 than in 1977, bucking the broader trend (Smeeding, 2004). We discuss the reasons for these different patterns in Chapter 8, Social Stratification.

During the final decades of the twentieth century, rapid change in the composition of the labour force was made possible by the computer. The computer automated many manufacturing and office procedures. It created jobs in the service sector as quickly as it eliminated them in manufacturing. The computer is to the service sector what the steam engine was to manufacturing, the plow was to intensive agriculture, domestication was to horticulture and pastoralism, and simple hand tools were to foraging.

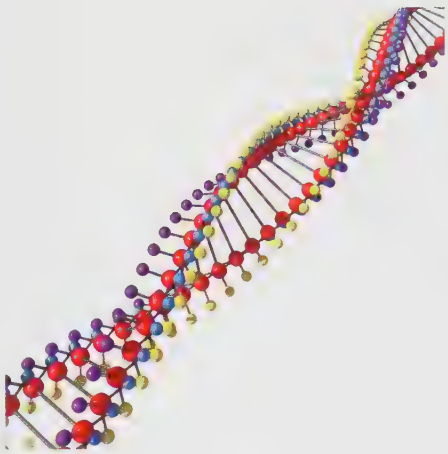
Postnatural Societies

On February 28, 1953, two men walked into a pub in Cambridge, England, and offered drinks all around. "We have discovered the secret of life!" proclaimed one of the men. He was James Watson. With his colleague, Francis Crick, he had found the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, the chemical that makes up genes. During cell division, a single DNA molecule uncoils into two strands. New, identical molecules are formed from each strand. In this way, growth takes place and traits are passed from one generation to the next. It was one of the most important scientific discoveries ever (Watson, 1968).

Recombinant DNA involves removing a segment of DNA from a gene or splicing together segments of DNA from different living things, thus effectively creating a new life form.

In the early 1970s, scientists began to develop techniques for manipulating DNA—so-called **recombinant DNA**). By the early 2010s, they could essentially cut and paste DNA. That is, they could remove a segment from a DNA strand and join the remaining sections together; replace a segment of DNA with another segment; or take a DNA strand

and connect it to segments of DNA from another living thing. This ability meant that scientists could create new life forms (a capability that until then had been restricted in the popular imagination to God) and repair DNA (something that until recently had not even been imagined). Enthusiasts proclaimed a "second genesis" as they began to speculate about the potential of the new technology to rid the world of hereditary disease; feed the hungry with higher-yield, disease-resistant farm products; and even create more intelligent, beautiful, and athletic children. For many millions of years, nature had selected the most adaptable living things for survival. Now it seemed possible for humans to speed up natural selection, thus escaping the whims of nature and creating a more perfect society under their control. The invention of recombinant DNA marked the onset of a new social era—what we prefer to call the era of **postnatural society**.



Ivan Proskuryakov/Thinkstock

The DNA molecule

Postnatural societies are societies in which genetic engineering enables people to create new life forms.

However, genetic engineering could easily result in increased social inequality (see Table 6.1). For example, the technology for creating more perfect babies will undoubtedly be expensive, so rich countries and rich people are more likely than others are to benefit from it. Princeton University biologist Lee Silver and Nobel Prize–winning physicist Freeman Dyson go so far as to speculate that the ultimate result of genetic engineering will be several distinct human species. People who are in a position to take full advantage of genetic engineering will be better looking, more intelligent, less likely to suffer from disease, and more athletic. People who are not so fortunate will face nature's caprice in handing out talents and disadvantages, just as our foraging ancestors did (Brave, 2003). The main, and perhaps only, safeguard against such an outcome is true democracy, which would allow ordinary people to decide which risks are worth taking and how the benefits of genetic engineering should be distributed within and across populations, taking all known associated risks into account.

Time for Review

- As societies evolve, what happens to human dependence on nature?
- How do levels of class and gender inequality change as societies evolve?

TABLE 6.1

The Transformation of Human Societies over the Past 100 000 Years

	Type of Society					
	Foraging	**Horticultural/ Pastoral**	**Intensive Agricultural**	**Industrial**	**Postindustrial**	**Postnatural**
Approximate years since origin	100 000	10 000	5000	250	70	50
Revolutionary technology	Simple hand tools	Domestication of animals	Plow	Steam engine	Computer	Recombinant DNA
Productivity, division of labour, population size, permanence of settlements (rank)	6	5	4	3	2	1
Gender equality (rank)	1	2	4	3	2	?
Class equality (rank)	1	2	3	3, then 2	2, then 2.5	3?

Freedom and Constraint in Social Life

Throughout this chapter, we have highlighted the ability of networks, groups, bureaucracies, and societies to shape human behaviour. As we have seen, these types of social collectivities can even lead to dangerous levels of conformity, compelling people to behave in ways that defy their better judgment. The vice of organizational rigidities can dominate people and affect the level of social inequality in society.

We emphasized the constraining nature of social collectivities in order to contradict the commonsense view that motives alone are responsible for people's actions. In conclusion, however, it is important to keep in mind that people do have options other than bowing to the will of their social collectivities. For example, in some cases, they can leave their social collectivities, while in others they can fight against the constrictions their social collectivities try to force on them (Hirschman, 1970). After all, it is always possible to say no, even to the worst tyrant.

It is also important to remember that people can use knowledge, including sociological knowledge, to increase their ability to struggle against the constraints imposed on them. Consider the Milgram experiment we discussed earlier, in which subjects administered what they thought were painful shocks to people just because the experimenters told them to. Years later, the experiment was repeated. Unlike in the original experiment, many subjects refused to go along with the demands of the experimenters. Some invoked the example of the Nazis to justify their refusal to abide by the researchers' demands, while others referred to Milgram's original experiment. They were able to resist unreasonable demands because of their knowledge, some of it perhaps gained in sociology courses (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina, 1982).

Paradoxically, people must sometimes form a new social collectivity—such as a lobby, a union, a political party, or a social movement—to successfully challenge social collectivities (Lipset, Trow, and Coleman, 1956). People are always free to form new social collectivities to counteract old ones, and in turn they can use them for good or evil.

Summary

1. **Do people act the way they do only because of their interests and emotions?**
   People's motives are important determinants of their actions, but social collectivities also influence the way they behave. Because of the power of social collectivities, people sometimes act against their own interests, values, and emotions.

2. **Is it a small world?**
   Yes. Most people interact repeatedly with a small circle of family members, friends, and co-workers. However, our personal networks overlap with other social networks, which is why only a few links separate us from complete strangers.

3. **What are social networks, groups, bureaucracies, and societies?**
   Networks are bounded sets of individuals linked by the exchange of material or emotional resources. Groups are clusters of people who identify with one another. Bureaucracies are large, impersonal organizations comprising many clearly defined positions arranged in a hierarchy; a permanent, salaried staff of qualified experts; and written goals, rules, and procedures. Societies are collectivities of interacting people who share a culture and, usually, a territory.

4. **How do social groups impose conformity on members and draw boundaries between those who belong and those who do not?**
   Social groups impose conformity on members by establishing norms of solidarity and structures of authority. They draw boundaries between those who belong and those who do not by creating cultural and legal differences between them.

5. **Is it possible to overcome bureaucratic inefficiency?**
   Bureaucratic inefficiency increases with size and degree of hierarchy. However, efficiency can often be improved by flattening bureaucratic structures, decentralizing decision-making authority, and opening lines of communication between bureaucratic units.

6. **How does the relationship of humans to nature change as societies evolve?**
   Over the past 100 000 years, the growing human domination of nature has increased the supply and dependability of food and finished goods, productivity, the division of labour, and the size and permanence of human settlements. Class and gender inequality increased until the nineteenth century and then began to decline. Class inequality began to increase in some societies in the last decades of the twentieth century and may continue to increase in the future.

Note

1. Similarly, 65 percent of Milgram's subjects administered the maximum shock when subject and actor were in different rooms and the actor could be seen but not heard, but 30 percent administered the maximum shock when the subject and actor were in the same room and the subject was told to force the actor's hand onto the electrode.

PART 3
Inequality

CHAPTER 7
Deviance and Crime

CHAPTER 8
Social Stratification

CHAPTER 9
Globalization, Inequality, and Development

CHAPTER 10
Race and Ethnicity

CHAPTER 11
Sexualities and Gender Stratification

CHAPTER 12
The Body and Health: Disability, Aging, and Death

7 Deviance and Crime

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Distinguish crime from deviance.
- Define and measure crime.
- Compare and contrast the major sociological explanations of deviance and crime.
- Recognize the principal trends in social control and regulation.
- Identify the main rationales for, and alternatives to, imprisonment.

Africa Studio/Shutter

The Social Definition of Deviance and Crime

In 1986, Joe Murphy was the Detroit Red Wings' number one draft pick. He went on to win the Stanley Cup with the Edmonton Oilers in 1990, earning $13 million during a 15-year career with the National Hockey League. By 2019, he was homeless, wandering the streets, and sleeping on the benches of Kenora, Ontario.

Murphy hears the voices of angels and believes they control people's actions. In interviews, he has recounted post-NHL experiences of depression, memory loss, and suicidal thoughts (Seidel, 2019). These symptoms characterize chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), also known as post-concussion syndrome, a degenerative brain disease caused by repeated blows to the head.

The only way to be certain that someone has CTE is by conducting an autopsy. In 2015, 35-year-old former Calgary Flames defenceman Steve Montador died in his sleep. A brain dissection confirmed that he suffered from CTE; his medical records revealed 19 documented concussions during his NHL career (Dryden, 2017). In 2018, 318 retired players sued the NHL for failing to warn them of the game's risks. It resulted an award of US$18.9 million, which amounted to just US$22 000 per player. In the process, the lawsuit revealed through unsealed documents that the NHL is deliberately marketed in ways that promote violence (Westhead, 2017).

Violence has been part of hockey for a long time; it has become normalized. Many fans enjoy it so much they cheer on combatants. When they get home, they can even visit www.hockeyfights.com, which offers videos of fights dating back to 2010 and allows visitors to vote on who won each tussle and score the violence of each fight on a scale of 1 to 10. Interviews reveal that junior players accept violence as a normal part of the game (Dennie and Millar, 2018).

If such fighting took place on the street, it could easily result in criminal charges. It follows that no action is deviant in and of itself. Social context—in this case, whether physical violence occurs on the street or during a hockey game—determines whether an action is considered normal, deviant, or criminal. **Deviance** occurs when a norm is violated and others define the violation as deviance. Norms vary widely, and behaviour that is considered normal in one context may be considered deviant in another one. Societies establish some norms as **laws**, which are norms that are specified and enforced by government bodies. **Crime** is deviance that breaks a law.

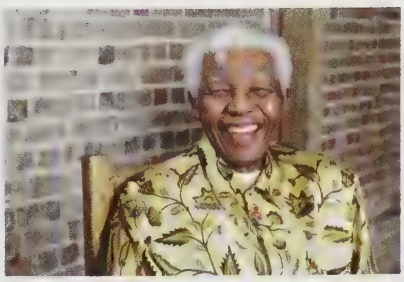
Deviance occurs when a person violates a norm and others define the violation as deviance.

A law is a norm stipulated and enforced by government bodies.

Crime is deviance that is against the law.

Is violence a normal part of hockey? Former NHL players like Joe Murphy have suffered permanent brain damage from concussions during their games.

Photo by MediaNews Group/The Mercury News via Getty Images



Alessia Pierdomenico/Shutterstock

Nelson Mandela spent decades imprisoned in South Africa for his activities that were designed to end apartheid. Today, Mandela is hailed as a hero. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 and served as the first democratically elected president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999.

The Difference between Deviance and Crime

From a sociological perspective, everyone is deviant in one social context or another. For example, rules for greeting people vary widely from one country to the next and among different cultural groups within a country. Violating such norms can cause offence (Swanson, Huang, and Wang, 2014). Visitors to South Korea should know that beckoning a person with an index finger is deeply offensive. Koreans use their index finger to beckon only cats and dogs. Instead, if you want to politely beckon another person in South Korea, you should do so with all four fingers facing down, much like Canadians wave goodbye.

Just as deviance is relative, so too is crime. Consider the famous people who have been labelled criminals: Socrates, Jesus, Martin Luther, Louis Riel, Mahatma Gandhi, Viola Desmond, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and so on. For many people today, these individuals are heroes. In contrast, people who planned and participated in the extermination of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), gays, and lesbians in Nazi Germany were acting in a way that was defined in Germany as law-abiding. You undoubtedly consider the actions taken by the Nazis in Germany to be criminal, but not the actions of Jesus or Martin Luther. That is because norms and laws have changed dramatically. Today, under Canadian law, it is a crime even to advocate genocide. We conclude that what is considered a crime at one time and place may be considered perfectly normal in another time and place.

Sanctions

Many actions that would otherwise be considered deviant are simply not noticed by others. Other actions may be thought of as deviant but are considered too trivial to warrant punishment. When more serious acts of deviance are noticed, they are punished, either informally or formally. **Informal punishment** is mild, and might include raised eyebrows, gossip, ostracism, shaming, or stigmatization (Braithwaite, 1989). When people are **stigmatized**, they are negatively evaluated because of a marker that distinguishes them from others and signifies that they have done something that is socially unacceptable (Goffman, 1963).

Informal punishment involves a mild sanction that is imposed during face-to-face interaction, not by the judicial system.

People who are stigmatized are negatively evaluated because of a marker that distinguishes them from others and that is labelled as socially unacceptable.

Formal punishment occurs when people are penalized for breaking laws. For example, criminals may be formally punished by being sentenced to serve time in prison or perform community service.

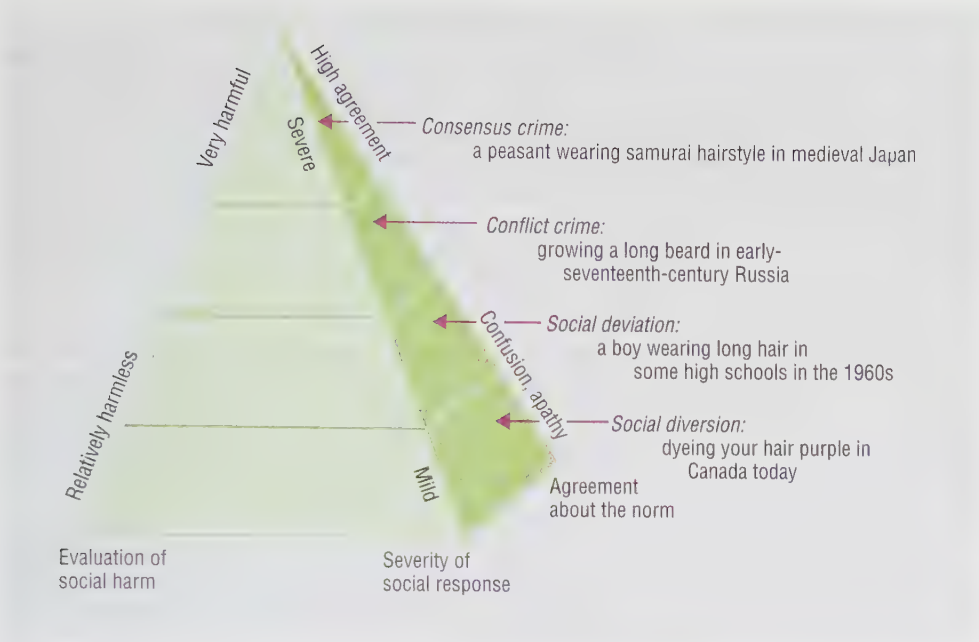
Formal punishment takes place when the judicial system penalizes someone for breaking a law.

Deviance and crime vary in terms of three criteria. First, as we have seen, they vary in terms of the *severity of the social response*, which ranges from mild disapproval to capital punishment (Hagan, 1994). Second, types of deviance and crime vary in terms of *perceived harmfulness*. Both *actual* and *perceived* harmfulness play a role here. For example, although Coca-Cola got its name because it initially contained a form of cocaine, today cocaine is an illegal drug because our perceptions of its harmfulness have changed. Third, deviance and crime vary in terms of the *degree of public agreement* about whether an act should be considered deviant or criminal. Thus, the social definition of murder can change over time and differs across societies. In the nineteenth century, Inuit communities sometimes allowed newborns to freeze to death if community members agreed that investing scarce resources in keeping the newborn alive could endanger everyone's well-being. Similarly, if stringent worker safety rules are in place, the death of a miner may be classified as manslaughter, while in countries that lack such stringent rules, it might be considered accidental (Takala et al., 2013). Even when it comes to serious crimes, social definitions vary.

Figure 7.1 allows us to classify four types of deviance and crime:

1. **Social diversions** are minor acts of deviance. One example is participating in fads and fashions such as dyeing your hair purple. People usually perceive such acts as harmless.

Social diversions are minor acts of deviance that are generally perceived as relatively harmless. They evoke, at most, a mild societal reaction, such as amusement or disdain.



Source: John Hagan, Crime and Disrepute, Pine Forge Press. Copyright © 1994. Used with permission of the author.

FIGURE 7.1
Types of Deviance and Crime

Social deviations are non-criminal departures from norms that are nonetheless subject to official control. Some members of the public regard them as being in some ways harmful, while other members of the public do not.

Conflict crimes are illegal acts that many people consider harmful to society. However, other people believe the acts to be not so harmful. People who commit conflict crimes are punishable by the state.

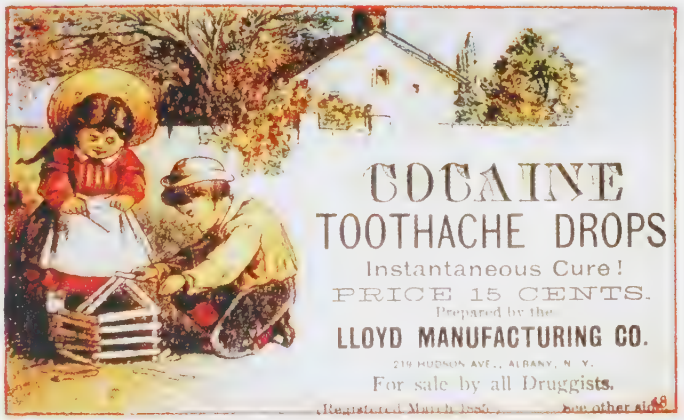
Consensus crimes are illegal acts that nearly all people agree are bad in themselves and harm society greatly. The state inflicts severe punishment for consensus crimes.

They evoke, at most, a mild societal reaction, such as amusement or disdain, because many people are apathetic or unclear about whether social diversions are, in fact, deviant.

2. **Social deviations** are more serious acts. Because large numbers of people agree that these acts are deviant and in some ways harmful, social deviations are usually subject to institutional sanction. For example, in the 1960s, some high school administrators considered long hair on boys a fairly serious deviation punishable by a humiliating public haircut.
3. **Conflict crimes** are deviant acts that the state defines as illegal but whose definition is controversial in the wider society. For instance, Tsar Peter the Great of Russia, who wanted to Westernize and modernize his empire, viewed long beards as a sign of backwardness. On September 1, 1698, he imposed a tax on beards to discourage men from growing them. Many Russians disagreed with his policy. Others agreed that growing long beards harmed Russia because it symbolized Russia's past rather than its future. Because of disagreement about the harmfulness of the practice, wearing a long beard in late-seventeenth-century Russia can be classified as a conflict crime.
4. Finally, **consensus crimes** are widely recognized to be bad in themselves. Little controversy surrounds their seriousness. The great majority of people agree that such crimes should be met with severe punishment. For instance, in medieval Japan, hairstyle was an important expression of people's status. If you were a peasant and sported the hairstyle of the samurai (warrior caste), you could be arrested and even killed because you were seen to be calling the entire social order into question.

As these examples show, people's conceptions of deviance and crime vary substantially over time and between societies. Under some circumstances, an issue that seems trivial to us, such as hairstyle, can be a matter of life and death.

One of the determinants of the seriousness of a deviant act is its perceived harmfulness. Perceptions vary historically. For instance, until the early part of the twentieth century, cocaine was considered a medicine. It was an ingredient in Coca-Cola and toothache drops; in these two forms, cocaine was commonly consumed by children.



National Library of Medicine, Washington, DC

Measuring Crime

Some crimes occur more frequently than others, and crime rates vary over time, place, and population categories. Let's now examine how sociologists measure these variations. We'll then review the main sociological explanations of crime and deviance.

First, consider crime statistics. The main source of crime statistics is information on crimes that is collected by the police. Since 1962, Canada has used the *Uniform Crime Reporting* (UCR) *Survey* to collect data from more than 1200 police detachments across Canada on 91 detailed categories of crime. Annually, the government publishes data on types of offences and characteristics of offenders.

Victimless crimes involve violations of the law in which no victim steps forward and is identified.

These statistics have two main shortcomings. First, much crime is not reported to the police. For example, so-called **victimless crimes** are violations of the law in which no victim steps forward and is identified. Victimless crimes include communicating for the purposes of prostitution, illegal gambling, and the use of illegal drugs. In addition, many common assaults go unreported because the assailant is a friend or relative of the victim; many victims of sexual assault are reluctant to report the crime because they are afraid they will be humiliated, not believed, or stigmatized.

The second main shortcoming of official statistics is that authorities and the wider public decide which criminal acts to report and which to ignore. For example, if the authorities decide to focus their energies on cracking down on illegal drug use, then more drug criminals will be apprehended and more drug-related crimes will be counted. Changes in legislation that result in the creation of new offences or amendments to existing offences also affect the number of recorded offences. As a result of these issues with official crime statistics, students of crime often use additional sources of information.

In **self-report surveys**, respondents are asked to report their involvement in criminal activities, either as perpetrators or as victims.

Self-report surveys are useful because they allow respondents to indicate their involvement in criminal activities, either as perpetrators or as victims. These surveys compensate for many of the problems associated with official statistics. In general, self-report surveys report approximately the same rate of serious crime as official statistics do but find two or three times the rate of less serious crimes. *Indirect measures* of crime are sometimes also used. For instance, sales of syringes are a good index of the use of illegal intravenous drugs. However, indirect measures are unavailable for many types of crime.

Self-report surveys are also useful because they tell us that most Canadians have engaged in some type of criminal activity and that, in any given year, about a quarter of the population believe they have been the victim of a crime. These large proportions remind us that committing an act in violation of the law does not automatically result in being officially labelled a criminal. To be so identified, an individual's law-violating behaviour must first be observed and deemed to justify action. The behaviour must be reported to the police who, in turn, must respond to the incident, decide whether it warrants further investigation, file a report, and make an arrest. Next, the accused person must appear at a preliminary hearing, an arraignment, and a trial. If the person does not plead guilty, the possibility always exists that he or she will not be convicted because guilt has not been proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

Victimization surveys are surveys in which people are asked whether they have been victims of crime.

In **victimization surveys**, people are asked whether they have been victims of crime. Although these types of surveys date back to the mid-1960s in the United States, no national victimization survey was done in Canada until 1988 (Fattah, 1991).

The most reliable victimization data in Canada comes from the *General Social Survey* (GSS) *on Victimization*. This survey is conducted every five years on a representative sample of Canadians. It asks respondents for their accounts of eight types of crime: sexual assault, robbery, physical assault, break and enter, motor vehicle/parts theft, theft of household property, vandalism, and theft of personal property.

Highlights of the most recent evidence (Perreault, 2015) include the following. Victimization rates in Canada have declined since 2004, with about a fifth of the population reporting that they were victims of crime in the past year. The majority of reported incidents were nonviolent, the highest proportion being theft of personal property (34 percent). Among violent incidents, the most common was physical assault (22 percent). Generally, the

victimization rate is higher in western provinces than eastern provinces; higher among single people than married people; higher among women than men; and higher among younger Canadians than older Canadians.

A large proportion of the criminal events reported through victimization surveys are not reported to police and therefore never become part of the official record. The best estimates are that such non-reporting occurs for about 70 percent of violent and personal property theft victimization. For this reason, the GSS victimization survey results differ from the official UCR survey results.

The UCR data are used to generate two official estimates of crime in Canada that track the volume of crime: the traditional, police-reported crime rate and the crime severity index. Traditional crime rate accounts can be strongly affected by changes in commonly occurring events that are of low severity. For example, a sharp decline in small thefts can result in a reduced crime rate even when such serious crimes as homicide are on the rise. To compensate for such distortions, the crime severity index gives greater weight to serious crimes such as homicide before including them in the measure.

Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show Canadian crime rate trends in recent decades. Figure 7.2 illustrates that crime rates followed a 30-year uptrend after 1962 and then declined steadily from the early 1990s until 2015, when they began trending upward again. Figure 7.3 uses the crime severity index to show the pattern of decline in criminal activity since 1998. Despite the upturn in 2015, the trends run counter to many Canadians' views of increasing crime.

Most Canadians would be understandably alarmed to hear that, in 2018, more than 2 million Criminal Code incidents were reported to police agencies (Moreau, 2020). They might assume that each of these incidents mirrored the violent, dramatic, and lurid offences that daily media reports bring to our attention. But that is not the case. Fully 79 percent of Criminal Code incidents involved no violence at all. True, the 2018 Canadian crime rate was more than twice what it was in 1962. However, the long crime wave that began its upswing in the early 1960s peaked in 1992 (when it was about four times the 1962 level) and fell steadily until it started increasing again in 2015.

Four types of crime are responsible for most of the post-2014 upswing. Fraud rose 13 percent in 2018 (Moreau, 2020). It has become a high-volume crime, largely because it has been made easier by computerization; online fraud is rampant (Figure 7.4). Police reports of sexual assault without use of a weapon increased 15 percent in 2018. Here we see the influence of the #MeToo movement, which has drawn attention to the extent of sexual assault and

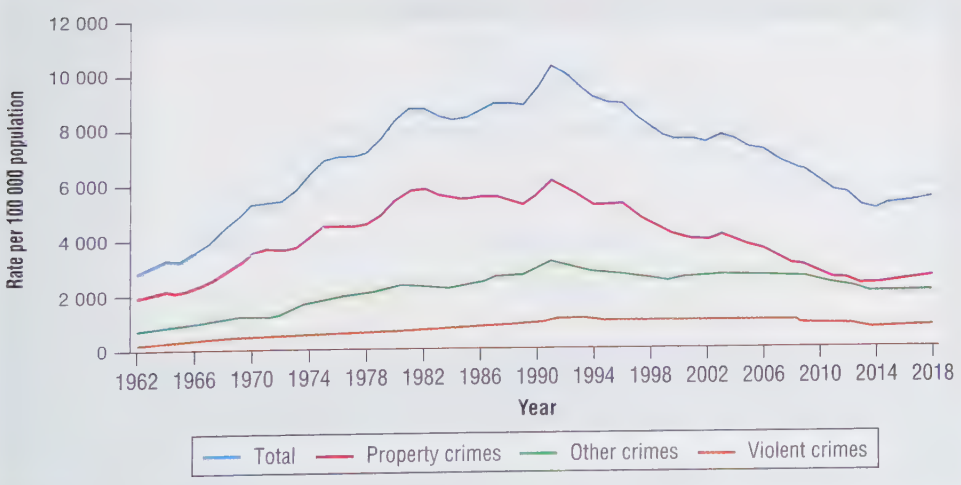
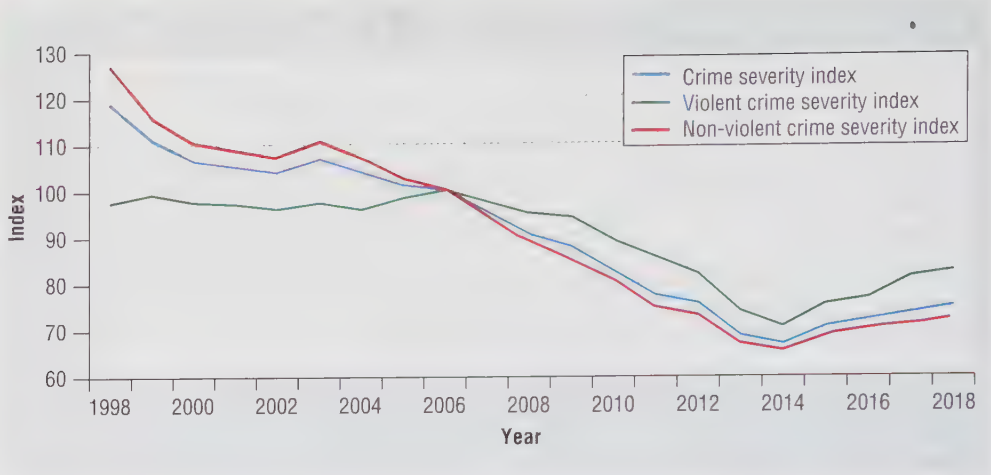


FIGURE 7.2
Police-Reported Crime Rates, 1962–2018

Source: Statistics Canada, Police reported crime statistics in Canada, 2018 (2019) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00013-eng.htm.

FIGURE 7.3
Police-Reported Crime Severity Indexes, 1998–2018



Source: Statistics Canada, Police reported crime statistics in Canada, 2018 (2019) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00013-eng.htm.

successfully encouraged women to report it. Shoplifting under $5000 and theft over $5000 have also increased (Moreau, 2020).

In 2015, the crime rate was at its lowest since 1969, and even in 2018 the rate was lower than it was a decade earlier. How do sociologists explain the long-term decline?

EXPLANATIONS FOR THE POST-1992 DECLINE IN THE CRIME RATE

Four main explanations exist for the long-term decline in Canadian crime rates. First, a growing number of well-trained law enforcement officers are fighting crime. Today, there are about 69 000 police officers in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015a; Wilson and Petersilia, 2011).

FIGURE 7.4
Cybercrime, 2018

Source: Statistics Canada, Just the Facts: Cybercrime in Canada, (2 December 2019) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-28-0001/2018001/article/00015-eng.htm

Declines in Canada's crime rate after 1992 may reflect the introduction of new community policing initiatives, enforcement efforts that target specific types of crime and attempt to reduce their incidence, the refinement of case-management methods, improvements in the field of forensics, and efforts directed toward crime prevention (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2012).

Second, young men are most prone to crime but Canada is aging and the number of young people in the population has declined. Specifically, the 15- to 24-year-old age cohort decreased in size by 6 percent between 1980 and 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2010a). Unlike the 1980s, when the baby boomers born between 1947 and 1966 entered their years of highest risk for crime, the 1990s saw a "baby bust." Because birth rates plummeted between 1967 and 1979, the pool of people at high risk of criminal behaviour has shrunk since the 1990s.

Third, the unemployment rate is strongly correlated with the crime rate (Cook, Watson, and Parker, 2014). Poor economic conditions in the 1980s made it hard to find a job and contributed to the high crime rate in that decade (Ouimet, 2002). Conversely, following a steep recession in 1990–91, and with the principal exception of the 2008–09 downturn, the Canadian economy grew, creating economic conditions that favour a decrease in crime.

Finally, and more controversially, some researchers argue that declining crime rates may be linked to the legalization of abortion (Donahue and Levitt, 2001). They observe that the crime rate started to decline about two decades after abortion was legalized in Canada and the United States. These researchers believe the drop occurred because, with the legalization of abortion, proportionately fewer unwanted children were brought into the population. They argue that, compared with wanted children, unwanted children are more prone to criminal behaviour because they tend to receive less parental supervision and guidance.

Criminal Profiles

Several social statuses are correlated with criminal behaviour, including sex, age, and race.

Of the 2013–14 Canadian criminal court cases in which the sex of the accused was reported, 80 percent involved a male accused and 20 percent a female accused (Maxwell, 2015). This pattern reappears for cases processed in youth courts. In youth cases in which the sex of the accused was reported, males accounted for 74 percent of cases and women for 26 percent in 2013–14 (Maxwell, 2015).

People who have not reached middle age commit most crime. The 15- to 24-year-old age cohort is the most prone to criminal behaviour. Although 15- to 24-year-olds represented just 12 percent of the Canadian population in 2012, they accounted for 76 percent of cases in youth court and 30 percent of cases in adult court (Boyce, 2013).

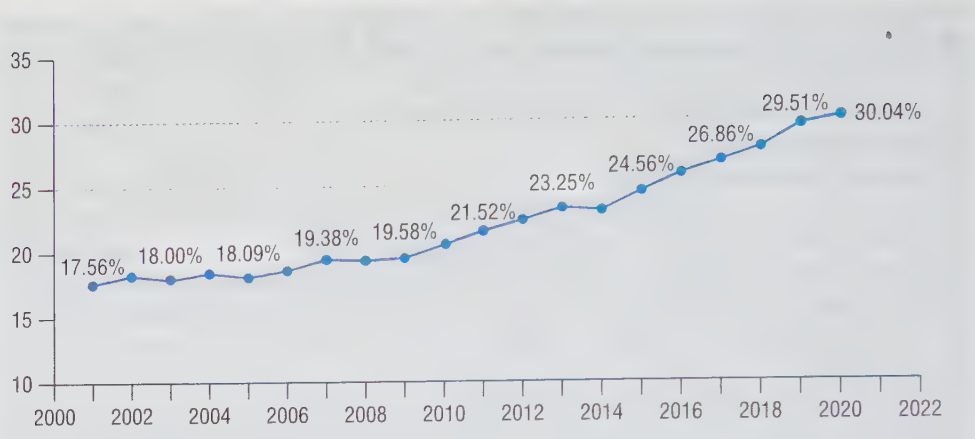
RACE, ETHNICITY, AND INCARCERATION

Official statistics show that race is also a factor in crime. Indigenous peoples compose 5 percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2017c). However, they accounted for 30 percent of people in custody in federal prisons in 2018 (Figure 7.5). Between 2010 and 2018, the number of incarcerated Indigenous people increased 43.4 percent. Over the same period, the non-Indigenous incarcerated population declined by 13.7 percent (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2020). The overrepresentation of Indigenous people in Canada's prisons is particularly marked in the Prairie provinces, especially Saskatchewan, where three-quarters of prisoners are Indigenous people (Office of Correctional Investigator, 2016: 43).

The sociological literature offers four explanations for the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canada's prisons (Office of Correctional Investigator, 2015). First, a disproportionately large number of Indigenous peoples live in poverty. Although the great majority of people living in poverty are law-abiding, poverty and its handicaps are associated with elevated crime rates. Second, Indigenous people tend to commit so-called

FIGURE 7.5

Percent of Federally Incarcerated Population of Indigenous Origin, Canada, 2001–19



Source: Office of the Correctional Investigator (2020)

Street crimes include arson, break and enter, assault, and other illegal acts disproportionately committed by people from lower classes.

White-collar crimes are illegal acts committed by high-status persons in the course of their work.

street crimes—breaking and entering, robbery, assault, and the like—that are more detectable than **white-collar crimes** such as embezzlement, fraud, copyright infringement, false advertising, and so on. Third, the police, the courts, and other institutions may discriminate against Indigenous peoples. Consequently, Indigenous peoples may be more likely to be apprehended, prosecuted, and convicted. Fourth, contact with Western culture has disrupted social life in many Indigenous communities (Chapter 10, Race and Ethnicity). Disruption has led to a weakening of social control over community members. Some people think that certain "races" are *inherently* more law-abiding than others, but they are able to hold such an opinion only by ignoring the powerful *social* forces that cause so many Indigenous peoples to be incarcerated in Canada.

Most of the factors listed above also account for the above-average incarceration rate of Black Canadians. Black people are more likely than are Whites to occupy a lower-class position, to engage mainly in street crime as opposed to white-collar crime, and to face a discriminatory criminal justice system. They are also more likely than White people are to be detected and apprehended engaging in criminal acts; and to be prosecuted, convicted, and jailed.

The claim that the criminal justice system engages in discriminatory practices based on race may be difficult for some Canadians to accept, but research suggests that the claim is credible. For example, a Toronto survey showed that older and better-educated Whites and Asians with no criminal record are significantly less likely to be stopped for police searches than are younger and less well-educated whites and Asians who have a criminal record. In contrast, age, education, and lack of a criminal record do not insulate Black people from searches. In fact, better-educated and well-to-do Black people are *more* likely to be stopped and searched by police than are less well-educated and poorer Black people. These findings suggest that Toronto police keep a closer eye on Black people than they do on White people and Asians, and are particularly suspicious of Black people with higher education and money (Wortley and Tanner, 2011).

Time for Review

- How does crime differ from deviance? Give examples of each.
- Explain why official crime statistics are conservative estimates.
- What factors help explain the recent trend in declining crime rates?
- Some Indigenous leaders deplore Canada as a racist society. What criminal statistics can be used to support their claim?

Explaining Deviance and Crime

> Lep: "I remember your li'l ass used to ride dirt bikes and skateboards, actin' crazy an' shit. Now you want to be a gangster, huh? You wanna hang with real muthafuckas and tear shit up, huh? Stand up, get your li'l ass up. How old is you now anyway?"
>
> Kody: "Eleven, but I'll be twelve in November."
>
> —*Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member. New York: Penguin, 1993*

"Monster" Kody Scott joined the notorious Los Angeles gang the Crips in 1975 when he was in Grade 6. He was released from Folsom Prison on parole in 1988 at the age of 24. About three years before his release, he changed his name to Sanyika Shakur and decided to transform himself from one of the most ruthless gang leaders in Los Angeles and the California prison system to an anti-gang crusader. Few people in his position have taken this path, not least because prisons are typically institutions in which inmates learn to become more proficient and ruthless criminals.

Why are so many people attracted to a life of crime? Why do deviance and crime occur at all? Sociologists rely on symbolic interactionism, functionalism, conflict theory, and feminist theory when searching for answers to these questions.

Symbolic Interactionist Approaches to Deviance and Crime

People may learn deviant and criminal behaviour when they interact with others. Symbolic interactionists focus on identifying the social conditions that support the learning of deviant and criminal roles.

LEARNING DEVIANCE

Howard S. Becker's classic study of marijuana users was instrumental in establishing the idea that becoming a habitual deviant or criminal is a learning process that occurs in a social context (Becker, 1963: 41–58). While playing piano in Chicago jazz bands in the 1940s, Becker spent time carefully observing the behaviour of 50 other musicians, informally interviewing them, and writing up detailed field notes after performances.

Becker found that the other musicians followed a three-stage learning process en route to becoming regular marijuana users. If they failed to pass a particular stage, they failed to learn the deviant role and become a regular user. The three stages are as follows:

1. *Learning to smoke the drug in a way that produces real effects.* To experience the intoxicating effects of smoking marijuana, first-time users must learn how to smoke the drug by taking deep drags and holding their breath. If they don't learn these strategies and practise them, some first-time users may give up, finding that marijuana has no effect on them. In contrast, other users are strongly encouraged by their peers to keep trying, and if they persist, they are ready to move on to stage two.
2. *Learning to recognize the effects and connect them with drug use.* Once they learn the proper smoking technique, new users need to recognize that they are high so that they can then connect the symptoms of being high with smoking the drug. If they are unable to connect symptoms with drug use—getting hungry, laughing uncontrollably, playing the same song for hours on end—they will stop using the drug. To help users make this connection, Becker found that new users often asked experienced users how they knew whether they were high. By identifying the symptoms of marijuana use, experienced users help new users make the connection between what they are feeling and their smoking of the drug. Once they make that connection, novices are ready to progress to stage three.
3. *Learning to enjoy the perceived sensations.* Smoking marijuana can lead to negative sensations such as a frightening loss of self-control (paranoia), dizziness, extreme thirst, itchiness, forgetfulness, or impairment of the ability to judge time and distance, which is dangerous when driving a vehicle. If negative sensations persist, users will stop using marijuana. Becker found that experienced users typically help new users reframe negative sensations as pleasurable. They teach new users to laugh at their impaired judgment, take special pleasure in quenching their deep thirst, and find deeper meaning

in familiar music. Novices become habitual marijuana smokers only if they learn to define the effects of smoking as pleasurable.

If, as Becker emphasized, deviance and crime are learned, then they often take place in a social context where experienced deviants or criminals teach novices the "tricks of the trade." Consequently, increased exposure to experienced deviants and criminals increases the likelihood that an individual will learn to value a deviant or criminal lifestyle and consider it normal (Sutherland, 1939, 1949). In addition, the more common a type of deviant or criminal is in a particular social environment, the more likely a novice will become that type of deviant or criminal. For example, in some environments, members of organized crime networks such as the Mafia recruit delinquent youths, while in other areas delinquent youths are more likely to create violent gangs. In other words, delinquent youths will learn different types of deviant or criminal roles depending on the availability of different types of deviants and criminals in their neighbourhoods (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

Recent evidence that deviance is learned comes from Iceland, which in the late 1990s had one of the highest rates of youth alcohol and drug abuse in Europe and now has one of the lowest (Figure 7.6). This transformation was achieved by acting on the assumption that if deviance is learned, it can also be unlearned (Kristjansson et al, 2019). Realizing that substance abuse is a leisure-time activity that young people learn by associating with friends and acquaintances who are already engaged in it, the government decided to keep kids busy by investing heavily in sports and other leisure-time activities. At the same time, curfews were imposed on youth, and parents were mobilized to form patrols, thus ensuring that curfews were respected.

LABELLING

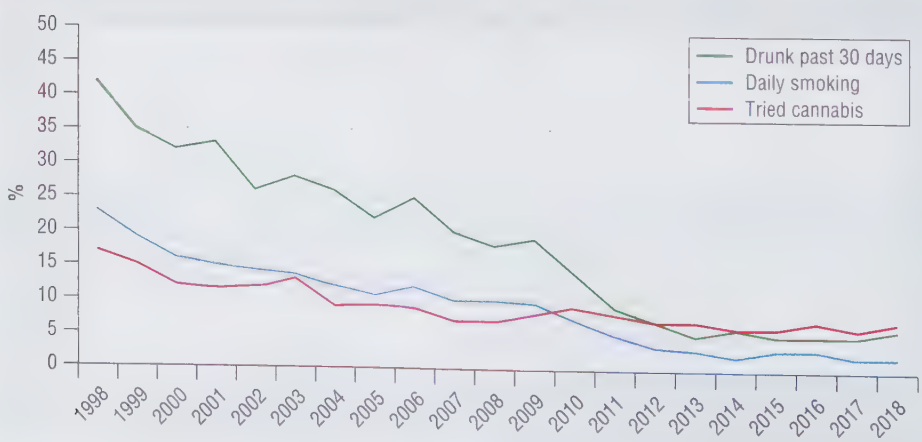
In 1995, Pamela George, a 28-year-old Indigenous single mother, was found beaten to death outside Regina, Saskatchewan. According to court testimony, after a night of heavy drinking, two 20-year-old, White, middle class university students, Alex Ternowetsky and Steven Kummerfield, picked up Pamela George, who was occasionally involved in sex work, and drove her outside the city limits. The young men forced her to perform oral sex, then beat her to death with a blunt object.

Intersectionality refers to the way in which gender and/or race, class, and sexuality interact to produce unique outcomes with respect to health, education, income, and other aspects of life.

Although originally charged with first-degree murder, a jury later found the two students guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter. In his instructions to the jury, Justice Ted Malone of the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench stated that the jurors should consider that the men had been drinking and that George was "indeed a prostitute." Members of the victim's family and Indigenous leaders were outraged. Tone Cote of the Yorkton Tribal Council said the sentence sent the message that "it's all right for little white boys to go out on the streets, get drunk and use that for an excuse to start hunting down our people." As if to confirm that assessment, the murderers were released from jail after serving just 6.5 years (see Box 7.1, Sociology and the Media, *Highway of Tears* and the Problem of Intersectionality).

FIGURE 7.6

Substance Use among GRADE 10 Students, Iceland, 1997–2018



Source: Planet Youth. https://planetyouth.org/

BOX 7.1 Sociology and the Media

HIGHWAY OF TEARS AND THE PROBLEM OF INTERSECTIONALITY

THE CANADIAN PRESS/Darryl Dyck

Indigenous Canadians are more likely than others to be victims of crime. Moreover, in the case of Indigenous women, we clearly see the operation of what sociologists call **intersectionality**—the interaction of gender and/or race, class, and sexuality to produce unique outcomes with respect to health, education, income, and other aspects of life (Crenshaw, 2016).

The horrible events that have taken place on Highway 16, northern British Columbia's east-west corridor, represent a case in point. Because the region has a poorly developed public transportation system and many residents are too poor to own their own vehicles, hitchhiking is common along the highway. More than 40 women were murdered or disappeared near the highway between 1969 and 2011. To date, only one of the murders has been solved. Most of the victims were Indigenous. The award-winning movie *Highway of Tears* (available on Netflix) details the events surrounding the murders and investigates their causes.

Consider homicide as an outcome of intersectionality. In Canada between 1991 and 2012, 705 Indigenous women and 3284 non-Indigenous women were victims of homicide. The homicide rate was 2.3 for every 100 000 non-Indigenous women and 14.1 for every 100 000 Indigenous women. Being a non-Indigenous woman in Canada was associated with a certain risk of becoming a homicide victim, but the risk was 6.3 times as high for Indigenous women (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015). This is clear evidence of intersectionality insofar as the female/Indigenous and female/non-Indigenous categories had widely different homicide rates. More evidence of intersectionality exists. For example, Indigenous women represent about 5 percent of Canada's female population but 60 percent of the country's missing women and girls. While a large percentage of female homicides are committed by relatives and friends of the victims, Indigenous women are significantly more likely than are non-Indigenous women to be murdered by a stranger. Some 84 percent of all female homicide cases in Canada are solved but the comparable rate for Indigenous female homicide cases is about 50 percent (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2015; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015).

Highway of Tears traces the roots of this case of intersectionality to the way people of White European origin have dealt with Indigenous Canadians since settler times. Because settlers wanted choice land for farming, mining, and, later, railways and hydroelectric power plants, they forced Indigenous Canadians out of their settlements and onto reserves that often lacked adequate access to food and clean water and typically provided few jobs. By thus destroying the Indigenous way of life, settlers created a substantially impoverished population largely dependent on the state. In addition, the government, aided by the Church, removed scores of thousands of Indigenous children from their families and placed them in residential schools, forcing them to give up their culture and their language; abusing many of them physically, sexually, and mentally; and preventing them from learning basic parenting skills. A deeply ingrained racist attitude toward Indigenous people oozed from this swamp. In this context, and especially in the four Western provinces, where Indigenous Canadians form 8.6 percent of the population (three times the percentage for the rest of Canada), some people have gone so far as to treat Indigenous women like things to be violated, then discarded (Statistics Canada, 2017g). *Highway of Tears* movingly tells their stories.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. A national inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls was proposed during the 2006–15 Conservative government. Prime Minister Harper's response to the proposal was that disproportionate Indigenous female homicide is not a sociological phenomenon but just a matter of bad people committing murder. What evidence in Box 7.1 suggests that Mr. Harper was wrong?
2. In later chapters you will learn about disparities in Indigenous/non-Indigenous educational attainment, health, and income. What do you anticipate discovering about the causes of these disparities?

Labelling theory, a variant of symbolic interactionism, holds that deviance results not just from the actions of the deviant but also from the responses of others. From this point of view, terms like deviant or criminal are not applied automatically when a person engages in rule-violating behaviour; others must define some actions as deviant and other actions as normal. Moreover, authorities typically exercise considerable discretion in how seriously they treat a deviant act, as the example of Ternowetsky and Kummerfield suggests (Matsueda, 1988, 1992).

Labelling theory holds that deviance results not so much from the actions of the deviant as from the response of others, who label the rule breaker a deviant.

Aaron Cicourel (1968) demonstrated the important role that labelling plays in defining the criminal behaviour of adolescents. He found that rule-breaking adolescents tended to be labelled as juvenile delinquents if they came from families in which the parents were divorced. That is because police officers were more likely to arrest adolescents from divorced families than adolescents from intact families who committed similar delinquent acts. Judges, in turn, tended to give more severe sentences to adolescents from divorced families. When sociologists and criminologists collected data on the social characteristics of adolescents who were charged as juvenile delinquents, the results indicated that children from divorced families were more likely to become juvenile delinquents. Their finding reinforced the beliefs of police officers and judges. The labelling process acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Functionalist Explanations

In contrast to symbolic interactionists, who focus on the learning and labelling of deviant and criminal roles, functionalists emphasize the social dysfunctions that lead to deviant and criminal behaviour.

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DURKHEIM

Durkheim (1938) initiated functionalist thinking on deviance and crime by making the controversial claim that society *benefits* from deviance and crime. He argued that when someone breaks a rule, it gives others an opportunity to condemn and punish the misbehaviour, reminding them of their common values. In other words, social solidarity is reinforced by clarifying the moral boundaries of the group.

Durkheim also claimed that deviance and crime help societies adapt to social change. For example, although Martin Luther King, Jr., was arrested in Alabama in February 1965 for taking part in a demonstration supporting the idea that Black people should be allowed to vote, later that year the Voting Rights Acts made it a crime to *prevent* Black people from voting. King's crime, along with similar crimes by other civil rights activists, led to positive social change, supporting Durkheim's point about the positive functions of deviance and crime.

MERTON

Robert Merton (1938) expanded Durkheim's theory by highlighting the *dysfunctions* of deviance and crime. Merton argued that although cultures often teach people to value material success, societies rarely provide enough legitimate opportunities for everyone to succeed. According to Merton's **strain theory**, a discrepancy between cultural ideals and structural realities leads to strain, which increases a person's likelihood of turning to deviance, which is dysfunctional.

Strain theory holds that people may turn to deviance when they experience strain. Strain results when a culture teaches people the value of material success and society fails to provide enough legitimate opportunities for everyone to succeed.

Some people who experience strain force themselves to follow social norms. Merton called such action "conformity." The rest adapt by engaging in one of the other types of action illustrated in Figure 7.7. They may reject society's goals and its institutionalized means of achieving them, dropping out of conventional society ("retreatism"); they may reject the goals of conventional society but continue to follow them ("ritualism"); they

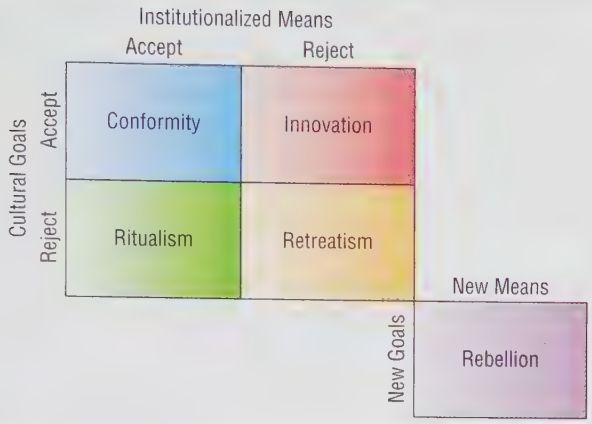


FIGURE 7.7
Merton's Strain Theory of Deviance

Source: Adapted from Robert K. Merton, 1938, Social Structure and Anomie. American Sociological Review 3: 672–82.

may accept cultural goals and create new methods of achieving them ("innovation"); or they may reject cultural goals and find new means of achieving new goals ("rebellion").

CRIMINAL SUBCULTURES

Along with individuals, social groups also adapt to the strain caused by social dysfunction. Adaptation may occur through the formation of criminal gangs. Gang members feel that the legitimate world has rejected them—and they have a point. Thus, although Black and Indigenous Canadians make up about 8 percent of the country's population, 25 percent of Canadian youth gang members are Black and 21 percent are Indigenous (Public Safety Canada, 2012).

These figures do not surprise sociologists, who recognize that Black and Indigenous Canadians are the two groups that experience the highest levels of discrimination in Canada's education system, labour market, and other arenas of social life. A disproportionately large number of young men from these groups reject the legitimate world and turn to crime, in the process developing distinct norms and values—a criminal **subculture** (Cohen, 1955; Wortley and Tanner, 2008).

A subculture is a set of distinctive values, norms, and practices within a larger culture.

Members of gang subcultures justify their criminal activities, making illegal activities appear morally acceptable and normal, at least to themselves. Such justifications can involve denying personal responsibility for their actions ("It wasn't my fault") or denying the wrongfulness of the act ("I was just borrowing it"). Criminals may also denounce those who pass judgment on them ("The cops are bigger crooks than anyone") or assert that their victims got what they deserved ("She had it coming to her"). Finally, justifications for criminal activities can include appealing to higher loyalties, particularly to friends and family ("I had to do it because he dissed my gang"). By using these types of rationalizations, criminals are able to clear their consciences and get on with the job (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

Although deviants may reject many aspects of mainstream culture, they are strict conformists in terms of the norms of their own subculture. They tend to share the same beliefs, dress alike, eat similar food, and adopt the same mannerisms and speech patterns. Although most members of the larger society consider gang subcultures deviant, gang members strongly discourage deviance *within* the subculture.

Gang members strongly discourage deviance within the subculture.

Viviane Moos/Corbis Historical/Getty Images

FUNCTIONALISM AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRIME AND CLASS

One of the main problems with functionalist explanations for criminal behaviour is that they overstate the connection between crime and class. The results from many self-report surveys indicate only a weak tendency for criminals to come disproportionately from lower classes, while some show no such tendency at all, especially among young people and for less serious types of crime (Weis, 1987). Instead, research indicates a stronger correlation between serious *street crimes* and class. For instance, people from lower classes are more likely to commit armed robbery and assault than are people from upper classes. A stronger correlation also exists between white-collar crime and class. Middle- and upper-class people are most likely to commit fraud and embezzlement, for example. We must therefore qualify generalizations about the relationship between class and crime by taking into account the severity and type of crime (Braithwaite, 1981).

In addition, it is important to keep in mind that official statistics usually exaggerate class differences because they are more accurate barometers of street crime than "suite crime." For instance, more police surveillance occurs in lower-class neighbourhoods than in upper-class boardrooms, and widely reported police statistics do not include some white-collar crimes because they are handled by different agencies. As we discuss in the next section, conflict theories help to overcome functionalism's inadequate explanation of the relationship between crime and class.

Conflict Theories

Conflict theorists maintain that rich and powerful members of society impose deviant and criminal labels on others, particularly those who attempt to defy the existing social order. Meanwhile, the rich and powerful are often able to escape punishment for their own misdeeds by using their money and influence.

Steven Spitzer (1980) summarizes this school of thought. He notes that capitalist societies are centred on private ownership of property. Productive labour and respect for authority must be available to ensure the smooth functioning of these societies. Thieves challenge private property when they steal, so theft is therefore a crime. So-called bag ladies and drug addicts are defined as deviant because they refuse to be a part of conventional society and engage in productive labour. And when young, politically volatile students demonstrate and militant trade unionists strike, authorities may define them as deviant or criminal since they represent a threat to the social order.

Spitzer notes that although the rich and the powerful also engage in deviant and criminal acts, they are less likely to be reported, convicted, and prosecuted for these acts (Blumberg, 1989; Clinard and Yeager, 1980; Hagan, 1989; Sherrill, 1997; Snider, 1999; Sutherland, 1949). The rich and powerful are less likely to be *reported* because white-collar crime usually occurs in private and is therefore difficult to detect. For instance, if competing corporations decide to fix prices and divide markets—both crimes—the executives are likely to make these types of decisions in boardrooms, private clubs, and homes that are not under police surveillance.

Similarly, the rich and powerful are less likely to be *convicted* and *prosecuted* for white-collar crime because they can afford to hire legal experts, public relations firms, and advertising agencies. These experts advise their clients on how to bend laws, promote their corporate image to the public, and influence lawmakers to pass weak laws. In addition, the punishment for white-collar crime is more lenient than for street crime. For instance, although fraud almost certainly costs society more than break and enter does, prison sentences for breaking and entering are nearly twice as likely as they are for fraud convictions (Thomas, 2002: 9).

In sum, conflict theorists emphasize the connection between power and crime. Differential access to economic resources results in differences, both in power and in

the ability to achieve desired outcomes (Chapter 5, Social Interaction). Power, in turn, is commonly used to perpetuate privilege. Since the sanctions applied to criminal and deviant conduct are unpleasant and constraining, members of privileged classes use their power to avoid being defined as criminal and, if so defined, from suffering serious consequences.

The earlier distinction between street crime and white-collar crime is relevant here. Street crime is associated with the threat or application of force or violence. In contrast, white-collar crime relies on deceit, concealment, and the violation of trust. The connection between class and type of crime is clear. Economic need often motivates crime among occupants of lower-class positions, while economic greed often motivates crime among occupants of privileged classes. Public attention is focused mainly on street crime, whereas the suffering associated with white-collar crime, although widespread, is largely underappreciated. For example, the Canadian Securities Commission estimates that more than a million Canadian adults are victims of investment fraud, with a third of them experiencing "extreme or significant impacts on their personal finances" (*Canadian Business Journal,* 2013). Substantial financial loss influences psychological, physical, and emotional health. While the federal government is taking steps to increase punishment for suite crime, Canada ranks poorly compared to other countries in terms of its laws, policies, and practices that sanction it (Brown, 2012; Federal Accountability Initiative for Reform, 2013).

SOCIAL CONTROL

Control theory holds that the rewards of deviance and crime are ample. Therefore, nearly everyone would engage in deviance and crime if they could get away with it. From this point of view, the degree to which people are prevented from violating norms and laws accounts for variations in the level of deviance and crime.

Conflict theorists argue that the rich and the powerful have a disproportionate amount of control over the criminal justice system and are therefore relatively free to engage in deviance and crime. One variant of conflict theory, **control theory**, generalizes this argument. Control theorists propose that most of us would like to have the fun, pleasure, excitement, and profit that deviance and crime promise. They also argue that most of us would commit deviant and criminal acts to acquire more of these rewards if we knew we could get away with it. Control theorists believe that most of us do not engage in deviance and crime because we are prevented from doing so. In contrast, deviants and criminals break norms and laws because social controls imposed by various authorities are too weak to ensure conformity.

Travis Hirschi developed the control theory of crime (Hirschi, 1969; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). He argued that adolescents are more prone than adults to deviance and crime because they are not yet completely socialized and have not developed a high level of self-control. Although both adults and adolescents may experience the impulse to break norms and laws, adults are more likely to control that impulse. According to Hirschi, the adolescents who are most inclined to delinquency likely lack four types of social control: They lack social attachments to parents, teachers, and other responsible role models; they lack legitimate opportunities for education and a good job; they lack involvement in conventional institutions; and they lack strong beliefs in traditional values and morality. Adolescents without the control that comes from these sources are most likely to act on deviant impulses. For similar reasons, boys are more likely than girls are to engage in juvenile delinquency, and people who experience job and relationship insecurity are more likely than others are to engage in crime (Giordano, 2014; Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis, 1987; Peters, 1994; Sampson and Laub, 1993). When authorities have tighter social control in all aspects of life, the frequency of deviant and criminal acts decreases.

Feminist Contributions

Conflict theory shows how the distribution of power in society influences the definition, detection, and prosecution of deviance and criminality. However, it does not address the consequences of power differences in terms of gender. Specifically, women are on average

less powerful than men are in all social institutions. Feminist sociologists assert that gender-based power differences influence how laws are framed, and consequently how crime is defined and how criminals are prosecuted.

Feminists support their claim by noting that, until recently, authorities in Canada and other parts of the world mostly ignored many types of crime against women, even when the crime involved non-consensual sexual intercourse. Before 1983, Canadian criminal law classified non-consensual sexual intercourse as *rape*, while today it is now considered a form of *sexual assault*. Although the authorities sometimes severely punished rape involving strangers, they rarely prosecuted date rape and acquaintance rape. Canadian law virtually ignored the issue of marital rape. Law professors, judges, police officers, rapists, and even victims did not consider date rape as "real rape" (Estrich, 1987). Similarly, until the 1970s, officials rarely discussed sexual harassment and physical violence against women, governments did not collect data on the topic, and few social scientists showed any interest in the subject. Because of a lack of power, many women were victimized, while society at large ignored the violence against them and their assaulters went free.

Some feminist sociologists expected that a shift in the relative power between women and men would lead to change in this state of affairs. And that is exactly what occurred in the 1970s. Women's position in the economy, the family, and other social institutions improved starting in the 1970s. Women now have more autonomy in the family, earn more, and enjoy more political influence than they did half a century ago. As their relative power grew, women pressed lawmakers to broaden the legal definition of crimes against women and enforce such laws more vigorously. At the same time, the women's rights movement helped to heighten concern about crimes disproportionately affecting women, including date rape, acquaintance rape, and marital rape (MacKinnon, 1979). Today, Canadian criminal law emphasizes that non-consensual sexual acts are sexual assaults. Sexual assault is prosecuted more often today than it was in the past, as are other types of violence against women and sexual harassment. As women became more powerful, social definitions of crimes against them changed.

In the 1970s, some feminists expected that growing gender equality would also increase the tendency for women to exhibit more criminal behaviour than they had in the past. They argued that as control over the activities of girls and women weakened, women would begin to behave more like men and become more crime-prone. Widely publicized cases of violent crime by teenage girls add weight to such claims, and official data, although not dramatic, support them. As Figure 7.8 shows, the ratio of female youth crime to male youth crime rose slowly between 1991 and 2002 but has declined somewhat since 2009.

Clearly, many theories contribute to our understanding of the social causes of deviance and crime. Each theory focuses on a different aspect of the phenomenon, so becoming familiar with all of them allows us to develop a more rounded appreciation of the causes of deviance and crime.

Time for Review

- What role do self-fulfilling prophecies play in labelling theory?
- How would a conflict theorist explain why street crimes receive more attention from the criminal justice system than does suite crime?
- A parent of a juvenile delinquent seeks your advice on how to get her daughter to conform. Based on control theory, what advice would you give?
- What have feminist researchers added to our understanding of criminal conduct?

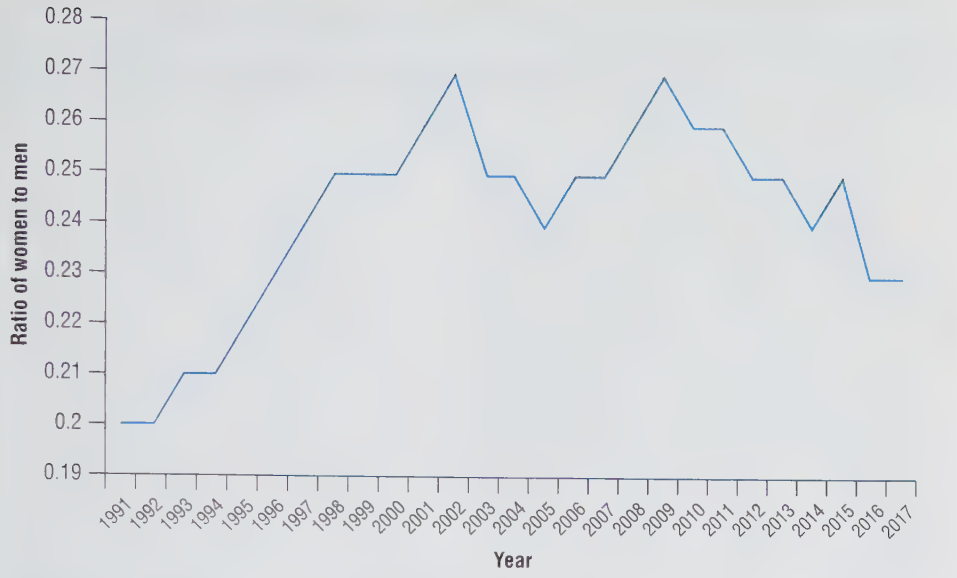


FIGURE 7.8

The Ratio of Female to Male Youth Admitted to Correctional Services, Canada, 1991–2017

Source: Statistics Canada, Youth courts, guilty cases by type of sentence, annually (number). CANSIM Table 35100041. (2020) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. http://dc2.chass.utoronto.ca.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/cgi-bin/cansimdim/c2_getArrayDim.pl

Social Control and Regulation

Internal and External Social Control

Responses to deviance are matters of **social control**, the ways that a social system attempts to regulate people's thoughts, feelings, appearance, and behaviour. Social control is divided into two main types: internal and external. **Internal social control** regulates people through socialization. It is directed at shaping people's minds so they view deviant actions as undesirable. The socialization process generates social control by internalizing norms. In contrast, **external social control** regulates people by imposing punishments and offering rewards. This method of control is enacted by police officers, lawmakers, judges, parents, teachers, and other authority figures. As we will now see, different proposals and policies for social control place more or less emphasis on reshaping minds versus imposing punishments and offering rewards.

Social control refers to the ways in which a social system attempts to regulate people's thoughts, feelings, appearance, and behaviour.

Internal social control regulates people through socialization and shapes people's minds so they come to regard deviant actions as undesirable.

External social control regulates people by imposing punishments and offering rewards.

Trends in Social Control

Because all societies impose sanctions on rule breakers, no discussion of crime and deviance would be complete without considering social control and punishment. However, the *degree* of social control varies over time and from one society to the next. *Forms* of punishment also vary. Below we focus on how social control and punishment have changed historically.

Consider first the difference between preindustrial and industrial societies. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, many sociologists argued that preindustrial societies are characterized by strict social control and high conformity, while industrial societies are characterized by less stringent social control and low conformity (Tönnies, 1988 [1887]). Similar differences were said to characterize small communities versus cities. As an old German proverb says, "City air makes you free."

There is much truth in this point of view. Whether they are fans of opera or reggae, connoisseurs of fine wine or marijuana, city dwellers in industrialized societies find it easier than do people

in preindustrial societies to belong to a group or subculture of their choice. In general, the more complex a society, the less likely many norms will be widely shared. In fact, in a highly complex society, such as Canada today, it is difficult to find an area of social life in which everyone is alike or in which one group can impose its norms on the rest of society without resistance.

Nonetheless, some sociologists believe that in some respects social control has intensified over time. They recognize that individuality and deviance have increased but insist this increase has happened only within strict limits, beyond which it is now *more* difficult to move. In their view, many crucial aspects of life have become more regimented, not less.

Much of the regimentation of modern life is tied to the growth of capitalism and the state. Factories require strict labour regimes, with workers arriving and leaving at a fixed time and, in the interim, performing routine tasks at a set pace. Workers initially rebelled against this regimentation since they had been accustomed to enjoying many holidays and a flexible and vague work schedule regulated only approximately by the seasons and the rising and setting of the sun. But they had little alternative as wage labour in industry overtook feudal arrangements in agriculture (Thompson, 1967). Meanwhile, as French social theorist Michel Foucault demonstrated in detail, institutions linked to the growth of the modern state—armies, police forces, public schools, health-care systems, and other bureaucracies—also demanded strict work regimes, curricula, and procedures. These institutions existed on a much smaller scale in preindustrial times or did not exist at all. Today, such institutions penetrate our lives and sustain strong norms of belief and conduct (Foucault, 1977).

The growth of modern surveillance, social control, and associated discipline is metaphorically captured in an idea introduced by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. A **panopticon** is an architectural design for prisons, consisting of an inner ring and an outer ring. The outer ring comprises prisoners' cells that are open to light on both sides. The inner ring is a tower with large windows that houses the guards. The key to the design is that guards can observe prisoners at all times but the inmates do not know when they are being watched. The effect is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility" (Foucault, 1977: 201).

A **panopticon** is a prison design that allows inmates to be constantly observed without their knowledge.

A **surveillance society** uses all-encompassing surveillance technology to optimize social control.

Although only a few prisons approximate the panopticon design, the model is a metaphor for the level of surveillance and its effects in a wide range of institutional settings. In postindustrial societies, digital surveillance technology is almost everywhere—exemplified by cookies, spyware, clickstream, fingerprinting, in-store video surveillance, closed-circuit television, credit cards, metal detectors, drug and DNA testing, health records, highway toll passes, and searchable databases. Anonymity is quickly becoming impossible, so authorities can exercise more effective monitoring and social control than ever before. We live in a **surveillance society** that uses all-encompassing surveillance technology to optimize social control (Staples, 2014; see Box 7.2, Social Policy).

Source: Friman/Wikimedia Commons

Panoptical prison design at the former Presidio Modelo (model prison), Cuba.

A recent development in social control in Canada is the issuance of fines of up to $2000 to individuals caught violating a province's or territory's COVID-19 social distancing rules, usually for failing to stand less than two metres away from people other than household members. While official data on the volume of tickets and fines are not available at

BOX 7.2 Social Policy

SHOULD FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY BE USED IN POLICING?

metamorworks/Shutterstock

Facial recognition software can be used by police to match existing images with other images, such as a store's surveillance camera video.

Facial recognition technology is a form of artificial intelligence that uses biometrics (body measurements and calculations) to match a given image with images in a large image database. Software like Amazon Rekognition enables law enforcement agencies to upload mugshots and driver's licence photos into a database and link them with surveillance camera footage to scan for individuals with, say, outstanding arrest warrants. Police forces have been using facial recognition for several years, but what has changed are its advanced technological capabilities. It is part of a rapidly developing era of "big data policing" in which law enforcement combats crime by relying on real-time crime data, personal data, online gang interactions, and so on (Ferguson, 2017).

In 2020, the *New York Times* published a report revealing that a little known private company, Clearview AI, had used web scraping to harvest 3 billion images from places like Instagram profiles, including links to where the image appeared, and marketed them to law enforcement agencies. The app can reveal a person's name, address, acquaintances and friends, and activities (Hill, 2020). In other words, access to pictures of you on a beach holiday in Mexico with friends in February might be sold to police to see if you match someone suspected of shoplifting, identity theft, or child sexual exploitation. Several police departments in Canada admitted to using the controversial app, only to backtrack after public uproar about its implications for privacy and data security, particularly since the company suffered a data breach (Bennett, 2020). The RCMP admits to using facial recognition software. The Calgary police force uses the technology, while the Halifax and Montréal police forces refuse to say whether they are using it.

One of the chief concerns with facial recognition is the possibility of mistaken identity. Several studies have found evidence of racial bias in the ability of facial recognition to accurately identify suspects. The American Civil Liberties Union found six members of the Congressional Black Caucus misidentified as individuals who had been arrested (Snow, 2020).

Technological advances in facial recognition software might render such inaccuracies a thing of the past. But, ironically, greater accuracy might exacerbate matters. One concern is the potential for stalking if the technology is used by the wrong person. Foreign governments might use it for blackmail (Hill, 2020). The Chinese government already makes widespread use of surveillance footage and AI to track the movements of its citizens.

More broadly, facial recognition software, by spelling the end of privacy, may erode human rights. This concern suggests a larger issue: Who is overseeing the technology? Most countries lack a regulatory framework around facial recognition (Schippers, 2019; Gilbert, 2020).

Ontario criminologist and former police officer Michael Arntfeld argues that the public safety benefits of facial recognition are greater than their drawbacks (Bennett, 2020). According to Interpol (the European police organization), over 650 criminals, missing persons, fugitives, and persons of interest have been identified since it began using facial recognition software in late 2016 (Interpol, 2020). The RCMP claims that their child exploitation unit was able to rescue two children through Clearview AI (Tunney, 2020). Meanwhile, privacy concerns around Clearview AI have prompted Canada's Privacy Commissioner and several provincial equivalents to launch a joint investigation of the company (Canadian Press, 2020a).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Are we on the fast track to a surveillance society, with no turning back?
2. What sorts of situations might justify the use of facial recognition, even if it meant that most people would have less privacy?

the time of this writing, Ontario criminologists gathered data from news reports and police press releases that allowed them to estimate that at least 4575 tickets had been issued by the beginning of May 2020 (Luscombe and McClelland, 2020a). Most of the tickets were handed out in Québec and Ontario, often to the same individuals because they were homeless and had nowhere but a public bench to rest.

Three main arguments have been lodged against fines as a means of social control during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, fines are probably not an effective deterrent against social distancing violations (Luscombe and McClelland, 2020b). Second, fines are unfairly levied. Poor and marginalized groups such as recent immigrants and the homeless receive most fines, yet members of these groups do not have the luxury of social distancing in the comfort of a large home, and the homeless sometimes huddle together for warmth. Third, fines place blame for the spread of COVID-19 on individuals, deflecting attention from poor pandemic preparedness on the part of the state (Valiante, 2020).

All these arguments suggest that COVID-19 magnified issues of social justice that existed long before late 2019. By the time COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, Ontario's anti-vagrancy law had been in force for two decades, resulting in millions of dollars in fines, only 1 percent of which were ever paid. The law did succeed in criminalizing the homeless rather than helping them get off the streets, increasing their risk of acquiring and spreading COVID-19 (Hermer and O'Grady, 2020).

Other important recent developments in social control include the "medicalization of deviance" and the widespread use of prisons. Let us now examine these reactions to deviance and crime in turn.

The Medicalization of Deviance

Increasingly, we deal with deviance by medicalizing it. The medicalization of deviance refers to the fact that "medical definitions of deviant behaviour are becoming more prevalent in … societies like our own" (Conrad and Schneider, 1992: 28–9). In an earlier era, much deviant behaviour was labelled evil. Deviants tended to be chastised, punished, and otherwise socially controlled by members of the clergy, neighbours, family members, and the criminal justice system. Today, however, a person prone to drinking sprees is more likely to be declared an alcoholic and treated in a detoxification centre. A person predisposed to violent rages is more likely to be medicated. A person inclined to overeating is more likely to seek therapy and, in extreme cases, surgery. A heroin addict is more likely to seek the help of a methadone program. As these examples illustrate, what used to be regarded as wilful deviance is now often regarded as involuntary deviance. Increasingly, what used to be defined as "badness" is defined as "sickness." As our definitions of deviance change, deviance is increasingly coming under the sway of the medical and psychiatric establishments, as the spread of mental disorders illustrates.

THE SPREAD OF MENTAL DISORDERS

Some mental disorders have obvious organic causes, such as chemical imbalances in the brain. Researchers can often identify these problems precisely, treat them with drugs or other therapies, and conduct experiments to verify their existence and establish the effectiveness of one treatment or another. Little debate takes place over whether such ailments should be listed in the psychiatrist's "bible," the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-5*).

The organic basis for other ailments is unclear. In such cases, social values and political conflict can determine whether they are listed in the *DSM-5*. For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s, North American psychiatrists fiercely debated whether neurosis, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), homosexuality, and self-defeating personality disorder were real mental disorders. In the end, homosexuality was dropped from an earlier version of the *DSM-5*, largely in response to the efforts of liberal-minded psychiatrists. So was self-defeating personality disorder, thanks to the efforts of feminists. Neurosis was retained at the insistence of Freudians. PTSD was added to an earlier version of the *DSM-5* after a strenuous lobbying campaign by Vietnam War veterans and their supporters (Scott, 1990). These cases illustrate that the medicalization of deviance is in part a social and political process.

In the mid-nineteenth century there was just one officially recognized mental disorder: idiocy/insanity. The *DSM-5*, published in 2013, lists 294. As the number of mental disorders has grown, so has the proportion of North Americans presumably affected by them. In the mid-nineteenth century, few people were defined as suffering from mental disorders,

but one respected survey conducted in the early 1990s found that 48 percent of people will suffer from a mental disorder—broadly defined, of course—during their lifetime (Blazer et al., 1994; Shorter, 1997: 294).

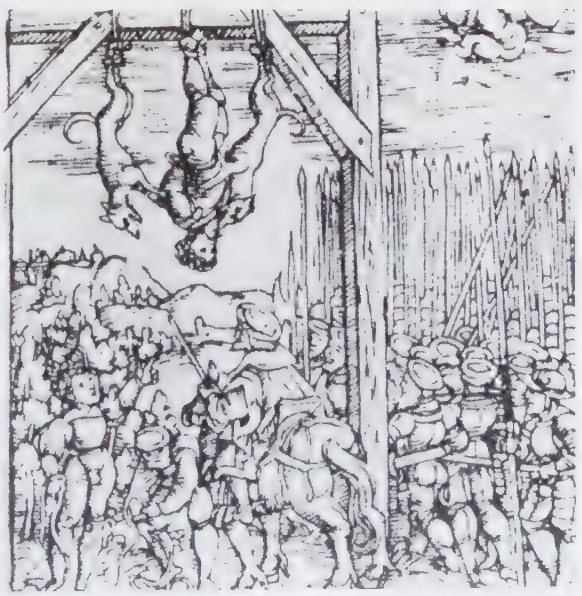
The number and scope of mental disorders have grown partly because North Americans are now experiencing more stress than ever before, mainly because of the increased demands of work and a growing time crunch. Donald Trump and COVID-19 hardly helped matters. At the same time, traditional institutions for dealing with mental health problems are less able to cope with them. The weakening authority of religious institutions and the weakening grip of the family over the individual leave the treatment of mental health problems more open to the medical and psychiatric establishments.

The cultural context also stimulates inflation in the number and scope of mental disorders. North Americans are inclined to turn their problems into medical and psychological issues, sometimes without inquiring deeply into the disadvantages of doing so. For example, in 1980, the term "attention deficit disorder" (ADD) was coined to label hyperactive and inattentive schoolchildren, mainly boys. By the mid-1990s, doctors were writing more than 6 million prescriptions a year for Ritalin, an amphetamine-like compound that controls ADD.

Evidence shows that some children diagnosed with ADD have certain problems with their brain chemistry. Yet the diagnosis of ADD is typically conducted clinically, that is, by interviewing and observing children to see if they exhibit signs of serious inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. This means that most children diagnosed with ADD may have no organic disorder at all. Some cases of ADD may be due to the school system failing to capture children's imagination. Some may involve children acting out because they are deprived of attention at home. Some may involve plain, old-fashioned youthful enthusiasm. (Doctors at Dalhousie University Medical School in Halifax made a plausible case that Winnie the Pooh suffered from ADD; see Shea et al., 2000.) However, once hyperactivity and inattentiveness in school are defined as a medical and psychiatric condition, officials routinely prescribe drugs to control the problem and tend to ignore possible social causes.

Finally, we have witnessed inflation in the number and scope of mental disorders because various professional organizations have an interest in it. Consider PTSD. There is no doubt that PTSD is a real condition and that many veterans suffer from it. However, once the disorder was officially recognized in the 1970s, some therapists trivialized the term. By the mid-1990s some therapists were talking about PTSD "in children exposed to movies like *Batman*" (Shorter, 1997: 290). Some psychiatric social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists may magnify the incidence of such mental disorders because doing so increases their stature and their patient load. Others may do so simply because the condition becomes trendy. Whatever the motive, over-diagnosis is the result.

Having considered the growth of surveillance and the medicalization of deviance, we now turn to the third major trend in the modern history of social control—the rise of the prison.



New York Public Library

In preindustrial societies, criminals who committed serious crimes were put to death, often in ways that seem cruel by today's standards. One method involved hanging criminals and starving dogs together so the dogs would rip the criminals apart.

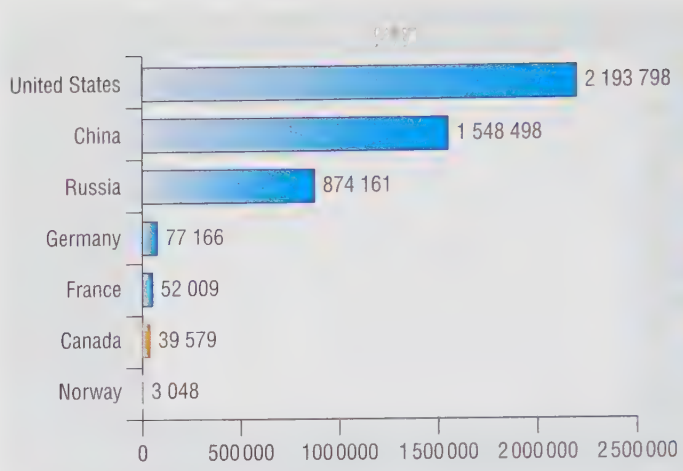
The Prison

In preindustrial societies, criminals were publicly humiliated, tortured, or put to death, depending on the severity of their transgressions. In the industrial era, depriving criminals of their freedom by putting them in prison seemed less harsh, more "civilized" (Durkheim, 1973 [1899–1900]). As societies industrialized, imprisonment became one of the most important forms of punishment for criminal behaviour (Garland, 1990; Morris and Rothman, 1995).

RATIONALES FOR INCARCERATION

Some people still take a benign view of prisons, seeing them as opportunities for *rehabilitation*. They believe that prisoners, while serving time, can be taught how to be productive citizens on release. In Canada, the rehabilitative ethos predominated from the 1950s to

FIGURE 7.9
Prison Population, Selected Countries, 2018



Country	Prisoners/100 000 population
USA	737
Russia	615
China	118
Canada	107
Germany	94
France	85
Norway	66

Sources: World Prison Brief (2020); World Population Review (2020a)

the early 1970s, when many prisons sought to reform criminals by offering them psychological counselling, drug therapy, skills training, education, and other programs that would help at least the less violent offenders reintegrate into society (McMahon, 1992; Smith and Schweitzer, 2013).

Today, however, many Canadians scoff at the idea that prisons can rehabilitate criminals. Some people see prison as a means of *deterrence*. In this view, people will be less inclined to commit crimes if they know they are likely to be caught and serve long and unpleasant prison terms. Others think of prisons as institutions of *revenge*. They believe that depriving criminals of their freedom and forcing them to live in poor conditions is fair retribution for their illegal acts. Still others see prisons as institutions of *incapacitation*. From this viewpoint, the chief function of the prison is to keep criminals out of society as long as possible to ensure they can do no more harm (Feeley and Simon, 1992; Simon, 1993; Zimring and Hawkins, 1995).

In 2018, an average of nearly 40 000 Canadians were in prison on any given day. Although Canada's incarceration rate is higher than that of most West European countries, it is much lower than that of the United States (Figure 7.9). The United States has the world's highest incarceration rate at 737 prisoners per 100 000 population, followed by Russia (615 per 100 000 population). The United States, China, and Russia account for about one-half of the world's prison population. The United States, with about 4 percent of the world's population, houses about 25 percent of the world's prisoners.

Moral Panic

What accounts for the fact that a large proportion of Canadians think we need to get tougher on crime—imposing minimum jail sentences, making jail sentences longer, perhaps even resurrecting the death penalty? Part of the answer is that the mass media tend to report crime in a way that frightens us. Mass media crime reporting is distorted in several ways (Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, 2013). A first distortion concerns the level of coverage. After sports, general interest, and business, crime is the fourth most commonly reported issue in the media. This level of coverage grossly exaggerates the amount of criminal activity in Canada. A second distortion involves the type of coverage. More than half of crime stories in the media relate to violent offences, which is several times the actual prevalence. A third distortion concerns the nature of coverage: the media highlight extreme or unusual events. Homicides in Canada, for example, are relatively rare events (Miladinovic and Mulligan, 2015). About 600 murders are committed in this country every year—a tiny percentage of the over 2 million Criminal Code incidents reported to the police annually. However, when a homicide occurs, it receives enormous media coverage. The same holds true for coverage of crimes committed by strangers. Children are much more likely to be abducted by a parent

than by a stranger, and adults are much more likely to experience violence at the hands of an intimate partner than someone unknown, but media coverage gives the opposite impression.

Given media biases, it is not surprising that many members of the public fear strangers, exaggerate levels of violence, and overestimate the risk of becoming a victim. To the extent we believe that the crimes in the headlines are typical of crime in Canada, we may believe that the battle to win the "war against crime" requires highly punitive measures.

In short, media presentations of the crime problem may serve to promote a **moral panic**. That is, in response to lurid headlines that direct attention to the most notorious—and atypical—crimes and criminals, the public may conclude that most crime is violent and predatory, that all criminals are dangerous, and that our crime rate signals a grave threat to our society's well-being—this despite the fact that, as we have seen, the crime rate has been falling since the early 1990s, albeit with an uptick since 2015.

A **moral panic** is an extreme over-response that occurs when many people fervently believe that some form of deviance or crime poses a profound threat to society's well-being.

Why, then, the moral panic? Does anyone benefit from it? There are several interested parties. First, the mass media benefit from moral panic because it allows them to rake in hefty profits. They publicize every major crime because crime draws big audiences, and big audiences mean more revenue from advertisers. Fictional crime programs also draw millions of viewers to their TVs.

Second, the crime prevention and punishment industry benefits from moral panic for much the same reason. Prison construction and maintenance firms and firearms manufacturers are big businesses that flourish in a climate of moral panic. Such industries want people to own more guns and imprison more people, so they lobby hard for relaxed gun laws and invigorated prison construction programs.

Third, the criminal justice system is a huge bureaucracy with many employees. They benefit from moral panic because increased spending on crime prevention, control, and punishment secures their jobs and expands their turf.

Fourth, and probably most importantly, moral panic is useful politically. Since the early 1970s, some politicians have instilled fear of crime in the public, criticized opponents for being "soft on crime," and promised voters that endorsing a get-tough policy would bring them more security. At election time, they make combating crime a focal point of their campaign promises. Over the objections of most Canadian criminologists, sociologists, and lawyers, and despite pleas from law enforcement officials as far away as Texas, where get-tough measures failed to curb crime, the former Conservative government (2006–15) passed a crime bill in 2012 that ratcheted up the moral panic in this country despite falling crime rates. Bill C-10 introduced new criminal offences, new and increased mandatory minimum sentences, longer waiting times before criminals could apply for pardons, harsher sentencing for young offenders, and plans to expand the prison system. The Canadian incarceration rate could have jumped higher if the Conservative government had not been defeated in 2015.

Alternative Forms of Punishment

Two of the most contentious issues concerning the punishment of criminals are these: (1) Should we reintroduce the death penalty to punish the most violent criminals? (2) Should we explore alternatives to prison for less serious crimes? In concluding this chapter, we briefly consider both alternatives.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Execution has a long history and is still used today in China, the Muslim Middle East, the United States, and northeast Africa (see Figure 7.10). However, globally since the 1960s, the trend has been to abolish execution or not use it even if permitted by law. China keeps its executions a state secret. Iran and Saudi Arabia carried out most known executions in 2018, although the number of executions in Iran dropped 50 percent from the previous year because of a change in its narcotics laws. If this trend continues, executions will eventually become a rarity.

In Canada, capital punishment has not been used since 1962, and it was formally abolished in 1976. That said, a 2016 poll found that 58 percent of Canadian adults believe the death penalty is morally right (Anderson & Coletto, 2016).

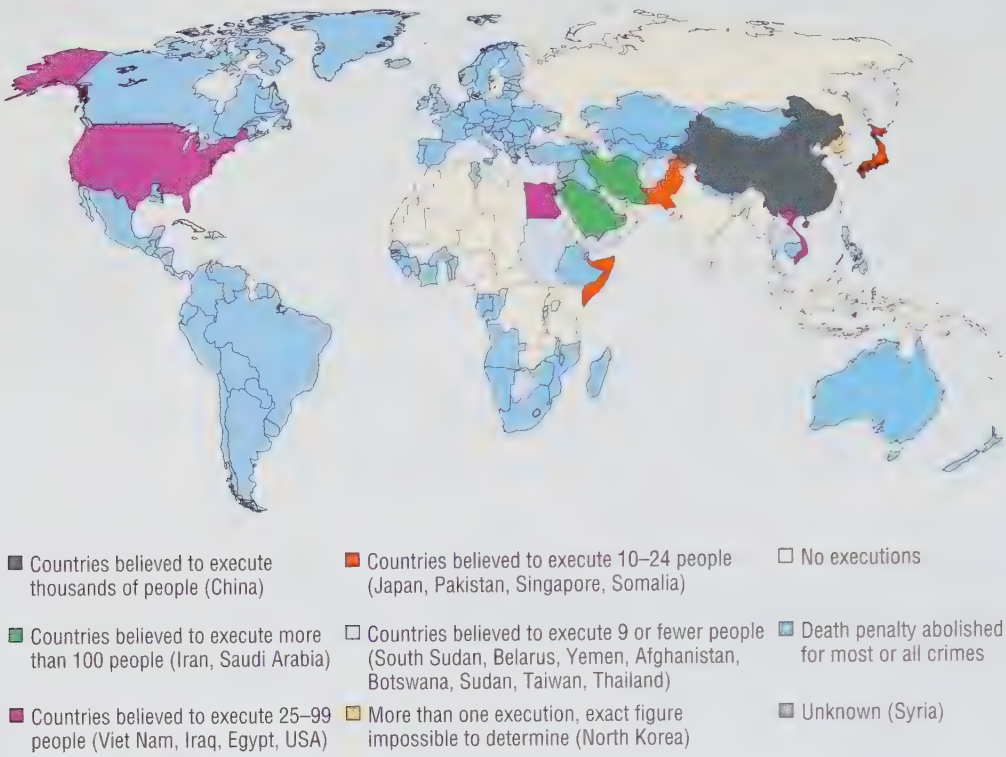

Countries believed to execute thousands of people (China)
Countries believed to execute 10–24 people (Japan, Pakistan, Singapore, Somalia)
No executions
Countries believed to execute more than 100 people (Iran, Saudi Arabia)
Countries believed to execute 9 or fewer people (South Sudan, Belarus, Yemen, Afghanistan, Botswana, Sudan, Taiwan, Thailand)
Death penalty abolished for most or all crimes
Countries believed to execute 25–99 people (Viet Nam, Iraq, Egypt, USA)
More than one execution, exact figure impossible to determine (North Korea)
Unknown (Syria)

FIGURE 7.10

Capital Punishment around the World, 2018

Source: Amnesty International. https://amnesty.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/DP-IMAGE-3.jpg

Although the death penalty ranks high as a form of revenge, not much evidence suggests that it is a deterrent. After all, murder is often committed in a rage, when the perpetrator is not thinking rationally. Many murderers are unlikely to consider the costs and consequences of their actions. Critics also point out that the United States has a much higher murder rate than do Canada and Western European nations that do not practise capital punishment. Similarly, in the United States, states without the death penalty have lower murder rates than those that use the death penalty (Death Penalty Information Center, 2012).

Moreover, we must remember that where capital punishment is practised, it is hardly a matter of blind justice. Figure 7.11 summarizes the US experience and shows how much race matters. Murderers who kill White victims are typically executed. Murderers who kill people of colour rarely receive the death penalty. Given this patent racial bias, we cannot view the death penalty as a justly administered punishment.

Finally, in assessing capital punishment, we must remember that mistakes are common. Nearly 40 percent of death sentences in the United States are overturned because of new evidence or a mistrial (Baumgartner and Dietrich, 2015). In Canada, the wrongful murder convictions of Donald Marshall, Guy Paul Morin, David Milgaard—and many others in recent times—should be sufficient to remind us that the wheels of justice do not always turn smoothly.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

Rehabilitation

The recidivism rate refers to the percentage of imprisoned people who commit another crime, usually within two years after release from prison.

In recent years, sociologists and criminologists have promoted several ways to reform the prison system. First, they have argued that we should reconsider rehabilitation. Advocates of rehabilitation suggest that the **recidivism rate**—the percentage of convicted offenders who commit another crime, usually within two years of release from prison—can be reduced by

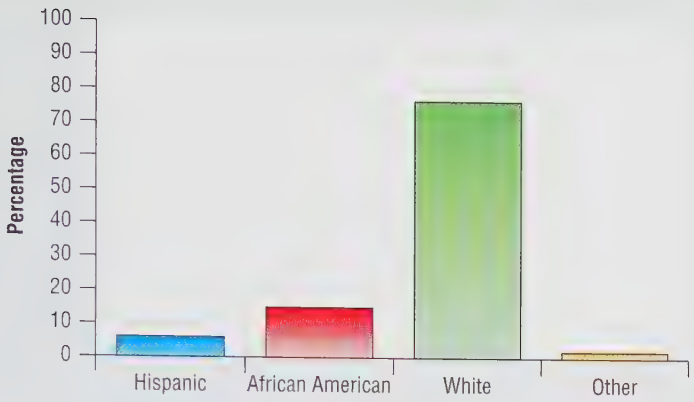


FIGURE 7.11
Race of US Homicide Victims in Cases Resulting in an Execution since 1976

Since 1976, the overwhelming majority of death-row defendants have been executed for killing white victims, although African Americans make up about half of all homicide victims.

Source: © 2013 Amnesty International USA. Used with permission.

means of education and job training, individual and group therapy, substance abuse counselling, behaviour modification, and simply treating prisoners with dignity.

Although some people think that such a system would do nothing to lower the recidivism rate and promote the reintegration of criminals into society, the Scandinavian experience suggests otherwise. It is based on the idea that the more closely a prison resembles the outside world, the easier it will be to train less violent prisoners to function well outside the prison. Thus, Danish prisoners with sentences shorter than five years live in prisons without walls, barbed wire fences, and gun towers. They wear their own clothes, shop inside the prison, cook their own meals, attend classes, work 37 hours a week, and are allowed a private family visit every week—unless they are married and have a child under the age of three, in which case the entire family can live in the prison with them (Larson, 2013; Reiter et al., 2016).

The result is that Denmark's recidivism rate for offenders of all types two years after release is about 29 percent, compared to 41 percent in Canada's less rehabilitative system (Fazel and Wolf, 2015). These figures suggest that, at least for less violent offenders, a get-tough approach to imprisonment is less effective than a rehabilitative approach.

Decriminalization and Legalization

A second proposed reform to our prison regime involves the decriminalization or legalization of certain actions. (Decriminalization allows for fines or other non-prison penalties; legalization does not.)

The production, distribution, and possession of cannabis became a crime in Canada in 1923. Criminalization restricted supply and encouraged the growth of organized crime to meet demand. It contributed to violence in society and put many Canadians in prison, even for the possession of small quantities of cannabis for personal use. However, in the twenty-first century, it became obvious to most politicians, employees of the criminal justice system, social scientists, and members of the public that legalization would be less harmful to society than the existing state of affairs. Reformers were convinced that legalization would put criminals out of business, shrink the size of the prison population, create legitimate business and employment opportunities for Canadians, and provide a new source of tax revenue for governments. Consequently, the use of cannabis was legalized for medical purposes in 2013 and for recreational purposes in 2018 (Rough, 2017).

Harm Reduction

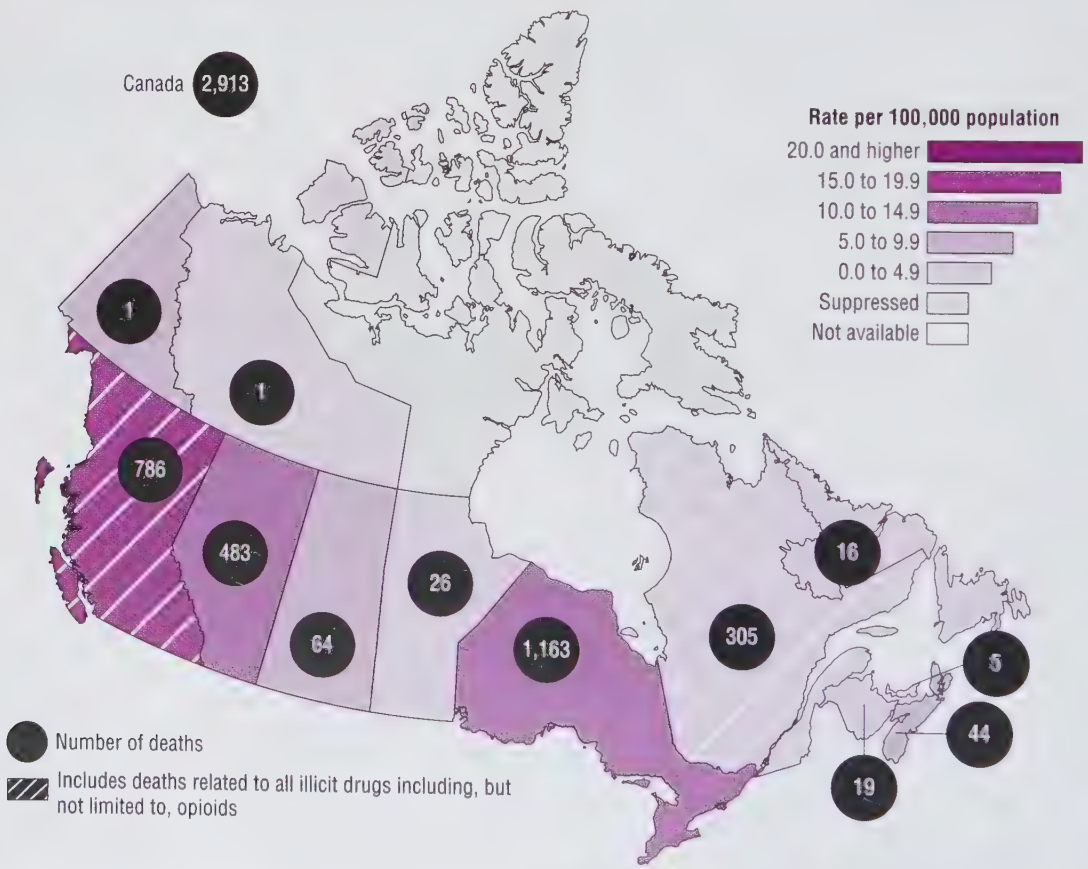
Now we face the question of what to do about addiction to opioids, a class of drugs that target receptors in the brain, increasing dopamine production and providing pain relief, but also causing feelings of relaxation and euphoria.

While opioids have been used for non-medical purposes for many years, their potency and therefore their lethality has increased. The surge in fentanyl use has changed the addictions landscape. Fentanyl is combined with heroin or other street drugs for a cheaper and more powerful high. As a result, opioid users are no longer able to know exactly what they are ingesting. Between January 2016 and September 2019, more than 14 700 opioid-related deaths and 19 490 opioid-poisoning hospitalizations occurred in Canada (Special Advisory Committee on the Epidemic of Opioid Overdoses, 2020). During the first nine months of 2019 alone, there were 2913 opioid-related deaths, 94 percent of them accidental (Figure 7.12). Fentanyl was involved in 78 percent of the cases. British Columbia had the highest rate of opioid-related deaths, followed by Alberta, while Ontario had the largest number of deaths.

How should society address the issue of fentanyl-tainted street drugs, which cause most of the deaths? One approach is that of harm reduction, which recommends that illegal drug users be regarded as patients, not criminals. The intent of harm reduction programs is to reduce the damage caused by substance use, including overdose deaths and the spread of diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C. Common harm reduction strategies include needle exchanges, methadone maintenance programs, free naloxone (overdose-reversing) kits, and

FIGURE 7.12

Opioid-Related Deaths in Canada, January to September, 2019



Source: © All rights reserved. Opioid-related harms in Canada (March 2020). Public Health Agency of Canada. Adapted and reproduced with permission from the Minister of Health, 2020. https://health-infobase.canada.ca/substance-related-harms/opioids/maps

supervised consumption sites. North America's first supervised consumption facility opened in Vancouver in 2003.

What if substance users were not subjected to arrest at all? **Criminalization** occurs when behaviours are made illegal by people who have the authority to pass laws. In the case of street drugs, such behaviours include use, possession, production, and sale. Decriminalization is a policy that makes substance use—but not production or sale—legal. Instead of facing jail time and a criminal record, non-criminal penalties such as fines or warnings and treatment options are given for possession of small amounts of a given substance (Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2018).

Criminalization refers to the process by which an activity is turned into an illegal act.

One of the best-known decriminalization success stories is in Portugal. Since its policies were enacted in 2001, Portugal has witnessed declines in drug use among adolescents and adults, drug-related prosecutions, HIV infections among drug users, and drug-related deaths—all indicators that decriminalization has worked as planned (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2011). Whether a similar policy will be explored in Canada remains uncertain. A recent poll indicates that 48 percent of Canadians favour decriminalization of all drugs (Angus Reid, 2019). At the same time, 32 percent of Canadians strongly oppose decriminalization. They might do so on moral grounds or because they view it as an improper use of tax dollars.

The death toll from opioids is so high that 2017 was the first time in 40 years that average Canadian life expectancy at birth did not increase (Statistics Canada, 2019j). With seemingly no end in sight to the crisis, the option of decriminalization is likely to remain in the political spotlight.

Diversion

The third reform to tough prison regimes that has been proposed in recent years involves reducing the number of incarcerated offenders by diverting them from the court and prison systems.

Diversion procedures handle tens of thousands of youth cases every year. For example, the Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program allows victims and offenders to meet under controlled conditions. To be considered candidates for the program, offenders must first acknowledge they are guilty of the act they have been accused of committing. Victims have the opportunity to explain to the victim the full impact of the criminal act. Offenders must then seek reconciliation with the victim by, say, apologizing and agreeing to financial compensation. Most cases referred for diversion involve a minor offence, such as theft under $5000. Offenders selected for the program generally complete the provisions of the agreements they make (Tufts, 2000).

Similarly, the Supreme Court of Canada has urged judges to "take into account the primary importance of restorative justice principles within Indigenous conceptions of sentencing," especially for less-serious offences (Hendrick and Farmer, 2002: 11). **Restorative justice** addresses the harm caused by crime, holds the offender responsible, and gives the parties affected the chance to articulate their needs. It thus supports "healing, reintegration, the prevention of future harm, and reparation, if possible" (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Restorative Justice Subcommittee on Public and Justice Sector Education, 2009). The restorative justice model views crime as behaviour that violates people and relationships rather than just the state and its laws. Although the behaviour of the offender is condemned, the essential value of the individual is affirmed and the offender reassured that, through conformity, the stigma associated with a crime can be removed.

Restorative justice focuses not on punishment but on rehabilitating offenders through reconciliation with victims and the larger community.

A summary of 25 years of research on the subject allowed analysts to compare the effectiveness of restorative and nonrestorative justice programs in terms of victim satisfaction, offender satisfaction, restitution compliance, and reduction in recidivism (Latimer, Dowden, and Muise, 2007). In brief, the researchers found that participating in a restorative justice program resulted in higher victim satisfaction ratings, higher restitution compliance, and lower recidivism rates than participating in a nonrestorative justice program did. Analysis of the comparative effectiveness of restorative justice programs on offender satisfaction was inconclusive.

All these reforms serve to remind us, yet again, that crime and deviance are social constructs.

Time for Review

- Explain the difference between internal and external controls. How can these concepts be applied to the way university tests are conducted?
- Imagine that a newspaper report of three deaths resulting from binge drinking on university campuses this year inspired a moral panic. What form might it take?
- Explain the differences between punishments aimed at rehabilitation, deterrence, and revenge. How does a death penalty sentence fit in this classification?
- How could recidivism rates be used to test the effectiveness of alternative sentencing programs?

Summary

1. **How does crime differ from deviance? How is crime measured?**
   Deviance occurs when a norm is violated. Crime results from violating a norm that has been made a law. Crime is measured through official statistics and self-reports. Official crime rates are generated from police reports and published in the *Uniform Crime Reporting Survey*. Self-reported measures use representative samples to gather evidence of the types and frequencies of victimization the public experiences.

2. **What are the major sociological explanations of crime and their contributions?**
   Symbolic interactionists draw attention to the ways in which deviant and criminal roles are learned. They also emphasize the role that labels play in the formation of deviant and criminal identities. Once labelled, a deviant or criminal identity becomes self-generating. Functionalists emphasize how misalignments between culturally defined goals and social opportunities create the motivation for crime and deviance. Conflict theorists stress that upper classes use their power to perpetuate privilege by downplaying their own misconduct and classifying others as deviant and criminal. Feminists show that, historically, because of women's less privileged status, crimes against them have often been ignored.

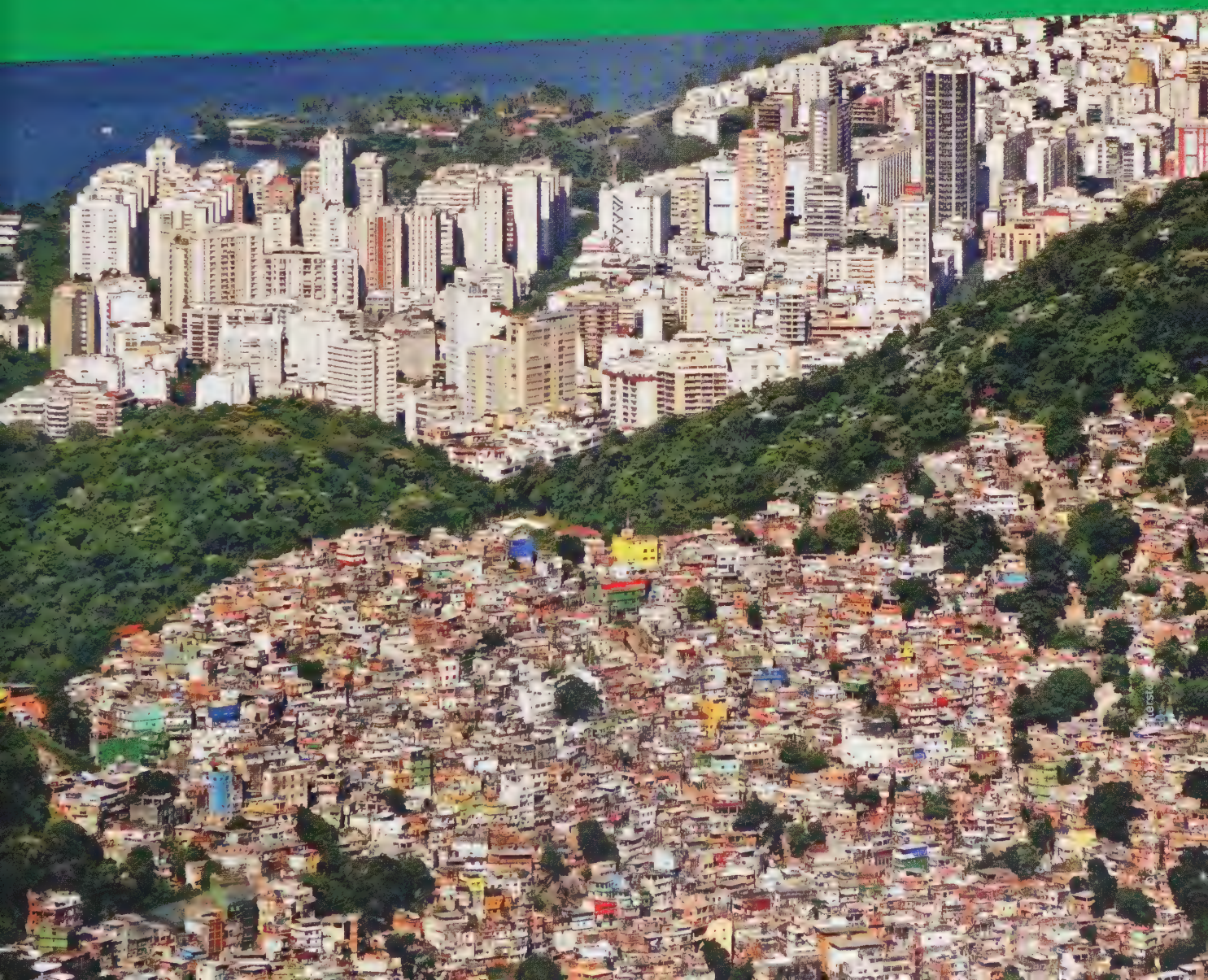
3. **What are the main trends in social control and regulation?**
   The sophistication and prevalence of digital technologies supports the rise of a surveillance society in which individual conduct can be continuously monitored and regulated, including through facial recognition. Deviance has become increasingly medicalized. Imprisonment has become a favoured means of social control. Moral panics have helped to increase the incarceration rate.

4. **What are the rationales for, and alternatives to, imprisonment?**
   The rationales for imprisonment include incapacitation, rehabilitation, deterrence, and revenge. The high expense and questionable effectiveness of imprisonment encourage the development of alternative types of sentencing. These alternatives include decriminalization, legalization, harm reduction, and diversion.

8 Social Stratification

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Identify and measure trends in economic inequality in Canada.
- Compare the contribution of different types of capital to economic achievement.
- Analyze the key characteristics of poverty in Canada.
- Contrast Marxist, Weberian, and functionalist explanations of stratification.
- Categorize countries and Canadian regions by the degree to which parents' income influences their adult children's income.
- Distinguish how different classes view the class system.



Patterns of Social Inequality

The Happiest Place on Earth

Abigail Disney is the granddaughter of the late Roy Disney, co-founder of the Walt Disney Company. She inherited a fortune. However, rather than investing most of her money and becoming even wealthier, she is giving it away. So far she has donated at least US$70 million. In 2016, Abigail and about 20 other US billionaires sent a petition to US presidential candidates asking that wealthy people be taxed more. In the face of growing economic inequality, these ultra-rich citizens are apparently motivated by a sense of fairness combined with fear that growing disparities between rich and poor will erode trust, provoke crime, incite conflict, and in general make social life hell.

Canada is like Disneyland. If not quite the happiest place on earth, where dreams can come true, it ranks near the top. Researchers have created a "happiness index" for 154 countries by combining data on (1) such factors as average annual wealth production, political freedom, and life expectancy with (2) the results of annual worldwide surveys asking respondents about their sense of wellbeing. In early 2020, Canada placed 11th, outranked only by New Zealand and countries in northwestern Europe (Helliwell et al., 2020).

In part, rank is correlated with inequality. People living in countries with high economic inequality are on average less happy than people living in countries with low economic inequality. However, averages can mask enormous differences in the populations they describe, as the financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada showed. In March 2020, government officials and medical experts sensibly asked Canadians to prevent the spread of the infection by self-isolating. However, financially, lower-middle-class, working-class, and poor Canadians took the biggest hit. With the least savings and proportionately the most debt, they also had to cease work; their jobs in factories, stores, and restaurants depended on face-to-face contact, so their places of employment shut down. Unlike many middle-class, upper-middle-class, and wealthy Canadians, they had few financial reserves and could not continue working from home via phone and the Internet (see Figure 8.1). The Canadians most affected financially by the stay-at-home directive perhaps took some solace in the fact that they didn't live in the United States, where the level of inequality is significantly higher and the average level of happiness is significantly lower than in Canada. Americans without jobs don't even have health insurance.

Social stratification refers to the way in which society is organized into layers based on wealth, power, and status.

The financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances prompted many Canadians to think and talk more about **social stratification**, the layering of society based on wealth, power, and status. Here, we continue the conversation. We first outline patterns of social inequality, focusing on change over time. We then assess major theories of social inequality in an effort to address a burning yet difficult question: Assuming the desirability of a smoothly functioning society with a happy population, how much inequality do we really need?

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Left: Children's favourite storybook characters at Anaheim, California's Disneyland, self-described as the "happiest place on Earth." Right: Abigail Disney

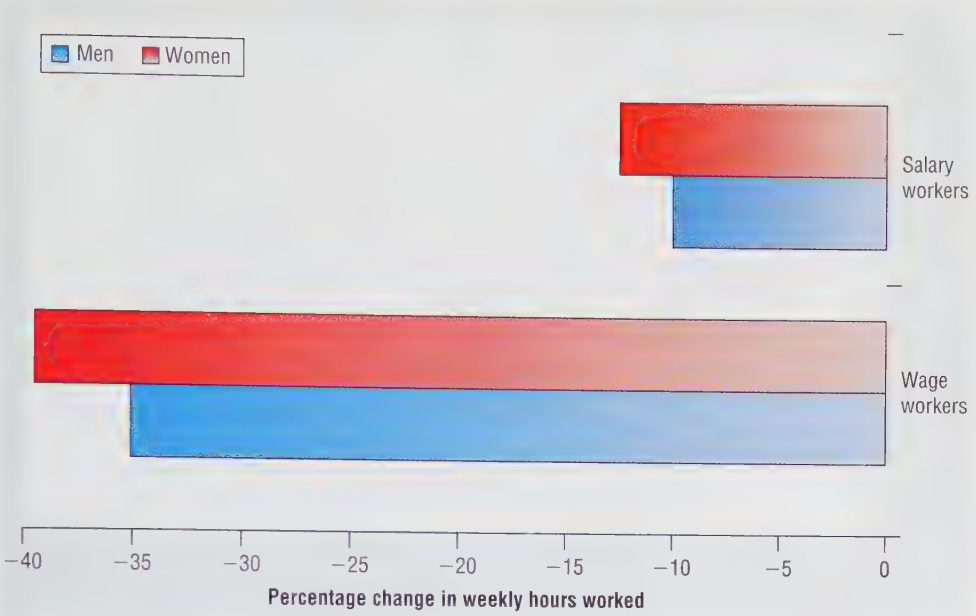


FIGURE 8.1
Percentage Change in Weekly Hours Worked, Canada, February to April, 2020

Note: Lower-middle class, working class, and poor workers tend be paid hourly wages, while middle-class, upper-middle-class, and wealthy workers tend to be paid monthly or bimonthly salaries. When COVID-19 hit, the percentage of weekly work hours plummeted 35 to 40 percent for wage workers. The reduction for salary workers was about one-quarter that figure. Women in both categories experienced a larger reduction in work hours than did men.

Source: Mikal Skuterud/University of Waterloo Economics Department.

Economic Inequality in Canada

Canada has grown richer over time and ranks as one of the world's most prosperous countries. Today, the average Canadian family earns about 21 times more than it did in 1951. This gain is less impressive when we take inflation into account. A soft drink that cost a dime a few decades ago now costs more than a dollar. Moreover, the average number of earners per family has increased as more women have entered the paid labour force. Consequently, more people now contribute to the income of the average family than was the case in 1951. Even so, Canadian families earn considerably more now than they did then, partly because they are more productive. Today, average workers earn more because they are more skilled and use more sophisticated technology to produce more goods and services per hour of work.

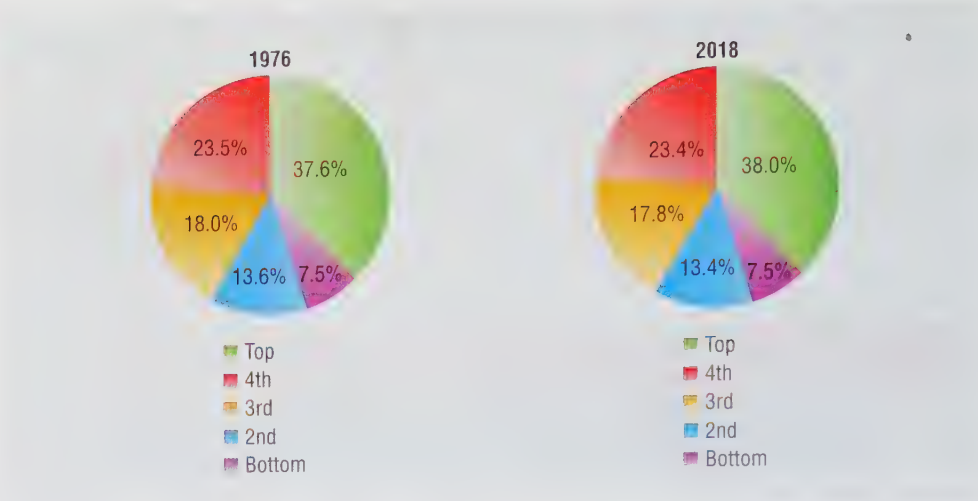
Averages simplify reality. Because income is not equally shared, many families are not average. Some are rich, some are poor, and many are in between. One measure sociologists use to observe income inequality and its change over time is the **income quintile share**. Here are the steps for computing income quintile shares:

The **income quintile share** measures the share of total income earned by each fifth of the population, ranked by income.

1. *Rank* families in the population from those with the lowest incomes to those with the highest incomes.
2. Compute the total income generated by *all families*.
3. Divide the rank-ordered families (from step 1) into five *equal-sized* categories ("quintiles"). These categories represent the fifth with the lowest incomes through the fifth with the highest incomes.
4. Compute the total income for *each quintile*.
5. Divide the total income for each quintile (from step 4) by the total family income (from step 2) to calculate the income quintile share.

FIGURE 8.2

The Distribution of After-Tax Income among Families and Unattached Individuals, Canada, 1976 and 2018



Source: Statistics Canada, Upper income limit, income share and average of adjusted market, total, and after-tax income by income decile, 2018 constant dollars, annually. Table 11-10-0193-01. (2020) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1110019301

Figure 8.2 reports the quintile shares among Canadian families for 1976 and 2018 *after* taxes and government transfers. In other words, these numbers represent the situation after income taxes, employment insurance, goods and services tax credits, and so on, have redistributed family incomes to reduce inequality. Through these redistributions, the richest Canadians lose about a fifth of their income, while the poorest fifth see their incomes increase by nearly two-thirds. If Canadians relied only on the market to distribute income, inequality would be much greater than the situation reported in Figure 8.2.

In 2018, the bottom quintile of families and unattached individuals earned just 7.5 percent of all income, while the top quintile earned 38.0 percent. On average, the richest fifth of families in Canada earned more than five times as much as the poorest fifth did. Income inequality increased in the last two decades of the twentieth century and then decreased, so the distribution of income was nearly the same in 2018 as in 1976. Still, comparing just these two years, the top 20 percent got relatively richer, the middle 60 percent got relatively poorer, and the bottom 20 percent remained in the same position. The pattern mirrors the trend in most rich countries, where income gaps have been widening for decades (Fortin et al., 2012).

The **Gini index** is a measure of income inequality. It ranges from a theoretical minimum of 0 (in which case every household earns exactly the same income) to a theoretical maximum of 1.0 (in which case a single household earns all income).

How does Canada's level of income inequality compare with that of other rich countries? Figure 8.3 shows the **Gini index** of inequality for 24 rich countries. The Gini index of inequality ranges from a theoretical minimum of 0 (in which case every household earns exactly the same income) to a theoretical maximum of 1.0 (in which case a single household earns all income). We find Canada in the middle of the ranking. The northwestern European countries do the best job of redistributing income by means of government policies; the United Kingdom and, especially, the United States do the worst job.

Explanations of Income Inequality

Why are some people rich while others are poor and most stand between these extremes? We know that some individuals earn high salaries because their natural talent allows them to take jobs that pay a lot. Sidney Crosby (hockey player), Andrew Wiggins (basketball player), Drake (rap singer), Ryan Gosling (actor), and James Cameron (film producer) are Canadians whose success on the world stage has provided them with substantial earnings. The principal reason for their excellence is a natural endowment in music, athletics, and so on. A genetic gift sets them apart. At the other end of the economic spectrum, some people have Down syndrome, a condition that prevents them from earning big salaries. These people, at both ends of the spectrum, are exceptional. For the great majority, genes play only a minor role in determining income.

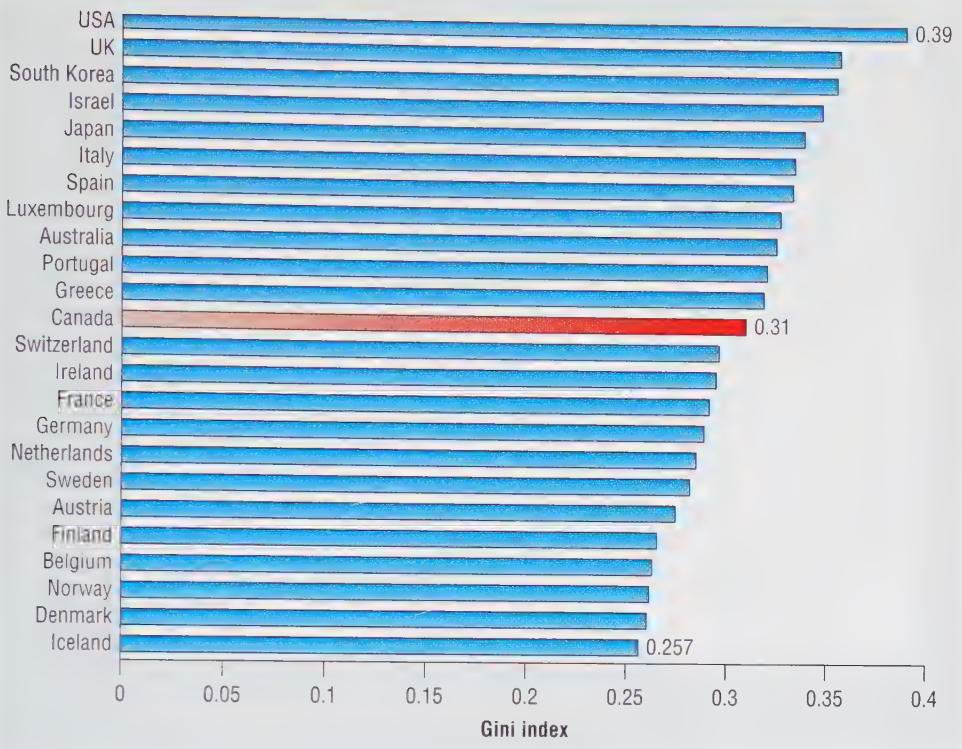


FIGURE 8.3
Gini Index, 24 Rich Countries, 2016

Source: OECD (2020b)

Even for people with a natural talent in the performing arts or athletics, effort is essential. Practice and years of dedication to the basics of a profession are common to all who enjoy success; it is said that 10 000 hours of practice are necessary to master high-level skills. Effort is also significant for many Canadians who spend long hours at work—whether amassing billable hours in a law practice, doing the endless chores required by a small business, or working overtime on a construction site. However, although diligence and perseverance might be necessary conditions for rewards, they are not sufficient. Some people work long hours doing multiple jobs but still earn low income.

Raw talent needs to be sharpened. Training, coaching, schooling—these are crucial ways in which skills are developed and nurtured. Natural talents and our efforts are important ingredients in this process, to be sure, but education matters. Indeed, the importance of education as a determinant of occupation and income continues to increase (Statistics Canada, 2013c). As the Canadian occupational structure moves farther from its traditional resource-based foundation to a more mature knowledge-driven economy, the importance of education will continue to grow.

If physical capital is investment in industrial plants and equipment, **human capital** is investment in education and training. Just as productivity increases by upgrading manufacturing plants and introducing new technology, productivity gains can result from investment in developing skills. Jobs requiring advanced skills are increasingly numerous in Canada. Better-educated workers are more skilled and productive in these jobs because they have invested in acquiring the skills and knowledge essential to our economy.

Human capital is the sum of useful skills and knowledge that an individual possesses.

Much evidence supports a human capital interpretation of the link between schooling and income (Gu and Wong, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2013c). However, this interpretation does not provide a complete explanation for why people earn what they earn. For example, in the legal profession, almost everyone makes the same human capital investment. Every lawyer acquires a law degree. Yet economic rewards vary, even for people with the same educational experience and the same type of legal practice. In particular, female lawyers with the same credentials and work experience as male lawyers tend to earn less than male lawyers do (Kay and Hagan, 1998).

Social capital refers to the networks or connections that individuals possess.

Cultural capital comprises people's ability to impress others, use tasteful language and images effectively, and thus influence and persuade others.

Part of the reason that people with the same amount of human capital may receive different economic rewards is that they possess different amounts of social capital. **Social capital** refers to people's networks or connections. Individuals are more likely to succeed when they have strong bonds of trust, cooperation, mutual respect, and obligation with well-positioned individuals or families. Knowing the right people, and having strong links to them, helps in finding opportunities and taking advantage of them (Coleman, 1988).

A related version of this argument is captured in the notion of **cultural capital** (see Chapter 3). Cultural capital comprises people's social skills: their ability to impress others, to use tasteful language and images effectively, and thus to influence and persuade people. Although the notion of social capital stresses your networks and connections with others, the idea of cultural capital emphasizes your impression management skills, your ability to influence others. In different ways, both concepts emphasize being part of the right "social club."

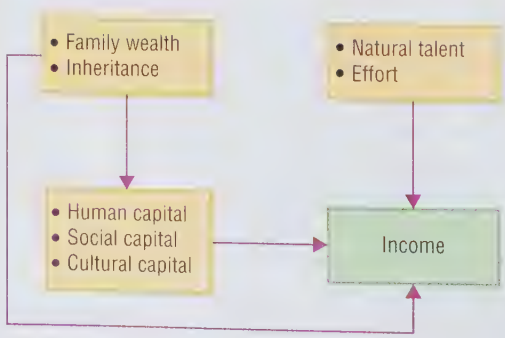
The concepts of social and cultural capital also share the idea that families higher in the social hierarchy enjoy more capital of all types. Connections and culture help you find a good job. The hiring of new recruits, then, depends not only on the talent, effort, and skills that people bring to the interview but also on their connections and culture. Indeed, culture and connections often influence who gets an interview.

Note that many of the factors influencing how high a child rises in the socioeconomic hierarchy depend on how wealthy a family is to begin with. An increasingly large number of players in the National Hockey League come from well-to-do families that can afford to offer their children the expensive training that is typically needed to reach the elite level. A full set of professional-quality equipment at around $3000 may be manageable for many families, but playing AAA hockey costs $25 000 a year. Training camps, personal trainers, travel, nutrition supplements and so on can mean that having a child play from the age of 5 to the age of 18 will cost between $100 000 and $250 000. If, in addition, the budding star is placed in a private hockey academy for schooling, that's another $40,000 or so a year (Kolodziej, 2014). Mitch Marner is a natural talent, but the fact that his family could afford to turn him into a Maple Leaf superstar didn't hurt.

Family wealth, including inherited wealth, helps people earn high income in two ways. *Indirectly,* family wealth can buy training and higher education and provide invaluable social and cultural capital to give offspring a boost up the economic ladder. *Directly,* family wealth can be invested to provide substantial annual income (see Figure 8.4). Of the 13 richest Canadians, six are grandchildren of one extraordinarily successful man: Roy Thomson. Although they may all be smart, hard-working individuals, they were born with tremendous advantages that surely mattered in determining their position in the socioeconomic hierarchy today.

In sum, natural talent and effort are significant factors—for a few occupations, extremely important factors—influencing earnings. For most Canadians, level of training and education (human capital) is a critical factor in finding continuous, well-paying employment. In addition, social and cultural capital help many people find economic success.

FIGURE 8.4
Factors Influencing Income



However, human, social, and cultural capital depend heavily on family wealth, so inheritance powerfully influences the economic success of offspring.

Reg Innell/Toronto Star/Getty Images

The Canadian Press/Bill Becker

Gary Hershorn/Corbis News/Getty Images

Roy Thomson (left), started a radio station in North Bay, Ontario, in 1931 with an investment of $231. He built a newspaper empire that his son, Kenneth, inherited (middle photo). Kenneth Thomson handed over the reins of the Thomson publishing, electronic media, and information services empire to his son, David (right).

Wealth Inequality

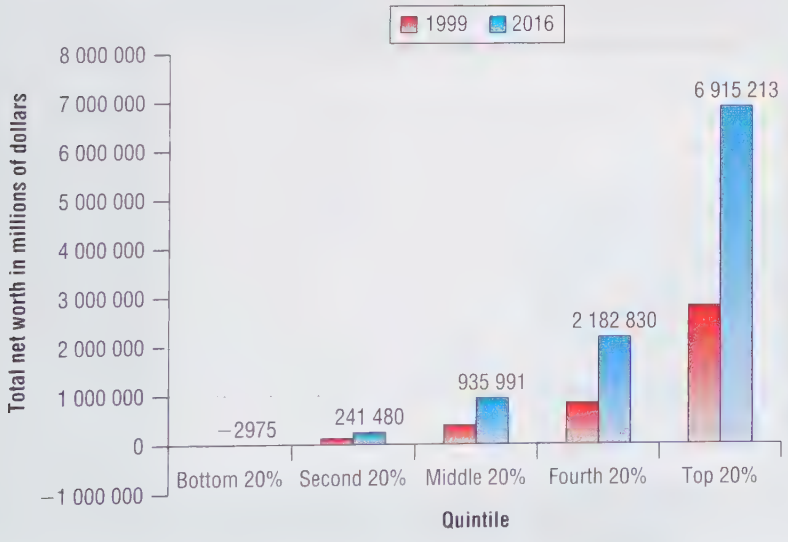
Annual income is the amount a person earns in a year. Wealth refers to the dollar value of a person's assets. For most people, wealth (or *net worth*) means a dwelling (minus the mortgage), a car (minus the loan), some appliances and furniture (minus the credit card balance), and modest savings.

At the apex of Canada's socioeconomic hierarchy are the country's 100 or so billionaires (*Canadian Business Magazine*, 2017). It is difficult for most people to comprehend their potential purchasing power. Each billionaire could spend $2500 a day and would still not be able to spend a billion dollars in a lifetime; at that rate of spending, a billion dollars would last for more than 1000 years. And that scenario assumes no investment. If invested sensibly, it would be impossible ever to exhaust a billion dollars by spending even $10 000 a day. In short, a billion dollars is an almost unimaginably large sum of money.

Wealth is much more unequally distributed than income is. In 2016, the 87 richest Canadians enjoyed as much wealth as the 12 million poorest Canadians combined (34 percent of the country's population) (Macdonald, 2018: 9). Moreover, in recent decades, wealth inequality has increased more than income inequality has, as Figure 8.5 strikingly shows. All quintiles were better off in 2016 than in 1999, but while the total wealth of the bottom quintile increased 32 percent, the total wealth of the top quintile increased 145 percent. Unfortunately, Statistics Canada data on wealth does not include such valuable assets as employer-sponsored pension plans, contents of the home, collectibles and valuables, annuities and registered retirement income funds. If these items were included, we have no doubt that the top quintile would show a considerably larger total gain than 145 percent over the 17-year period under consideration.

FIGURE 8.5

Total Net Worth of Canadian Families, 1999 and 2016, in millions of 2016 dollars



Percentage change by quintile, 1999–2016	
Quintile	Change (%)
Bottom	32
Second	124
Middle	158
Fourth	163
Top	145

Note: The numbers over the blue bars indicate the total assets of each quintile in millions of dollars in 2016. The negative sign for the number over the bottom quintile means that the debt of Canadian families in the bottom quintile was $2,975,000,000 more than the value of their assets in 2016.

Source: Statistics Canada (2020e)

Earlier you learned about the factors that account for variation in people's income, but how do people become wealthy? All the factors that account for variation in people's income also explain variation in wealth since wealth is just accumulated income. Less obviously, the greater the amount of income people can accumulate, the more they can take advantage of mechanisms that permit the multiplication of income and wealth.

Most people earn most of their income from wages or salaries. Wealthy people earn much or most of their income from investments in stocks and properties. This is important because, in Canada, income tax is calculated on 100 percent of income from wages or salaries. However, it is calculated on only about 87 percent of income from dividends paid to people who own stock in Canadian corporations. (The exact percentage varies a little by province and territories.) And income tax is calculated on just 50 percent of income from profits earned by selling stocks and properties ("capital gains"). People who profit when they sell stocks or properties can even subtract previous years' capital losses from their tax bill. In short, tax laws are written so the biggest tax breaks go to those with income from sources in which wealthy people are most heavily invested. Wealthy people enjoy another bonus in that investments in stocks and properties have in the long run grown faster than have wages and salaries (Piketty, 2014). Finally, the wealthy can pass their assets on to heirs tax free because, unlike most other wealthy countries, Canada has no gift tax and no inheritance tax. In this manner, tax laws help the wealthier become wealthier still. Tax laws are written this way because wealth is typically accompanied by the power to get laws that favour the wealthy passed (see Chapter 13, Political Economy).

Poverty

HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

At the bottom of the income distribution are people who are homeless. In cities across the country, people sleep under bridges, in back alleys, behind dumpsters, and in thickets in public parks. They do so night after night, month after month. Recent estimates suggest that every year, at least 235 000 Canadians use homeless shelters or sleep outside (Gaetz et al., 2016). These numbers represent only the visibly homeless people. Including the "hidden homeless" (people who stay with family or friends temporarily), the number rises to as high as 900 000 (Wellesley Institute, 2010). In Winnipeg, nearly three-quarters of the homeless are Indigenous (Isaak et al., 2018).

Community groups have erected teepees as temporary shelters for Winnipeg's primarily Indigenous homeless population.

Shannon VanRaes/Winnipeg Free Press

DEFINING POVERTY

Homelessness is one manifestation of poverty. Exactly how many Canadians live in poverty is a matter of debate because there is disagreement about how to define it. A first disagreement occurs around whether poverty should be defined in absolute or relative terms. An absolute definition of poverty focuses on bare essentials, suggesting that poor families have resources inadequate for acquiring the basic necessities of life (food, shelter, clothing). Agreement on "bare essentials" depends on values and judgments (Sarlo, 2001). What is essential varies from time to time, place to place, and group to group. Many of our ancestors lived without indoor plumbing and some Canadians still do, but most people would define indoor plumbing as essential. A family could survive on a steady diet of cod and potatoes, but most would define such a family as poor.

A relative poverty line also has drawbacks. Two questions are central: Relative to what? How relative? This second area of disagreement relates to whether poverty ought to be defined narrowly, in

terms of economic measures (e.g., income), or more broadly, with respect to community standards (e.g., safety of working conditions, environmental quality, quality of housing). Most definitions tend to be narrow, focusing primarily on income. But even if a relative poverty line is defined narrowly, how relative ought it to be? One-third of average income? One-half? Some other fraction?

Yet another disagreement plagues any definition. Should poverty be defined on the basis of income or consumption? Since "bare essentials" is a core idea in any definition of poverty, it makes good sense to ask about, and measure, poverty as the cost of purchasing bare essentials. Deprivation occurs when a family cannot acquire the essentials, not necessarily when income is too low. Income and consumption are correlated, of course, but people with high net wealth can live off their savings even when earning a low income.

In one sense, the definition of poverty means little to a homeless woman sleeping on top of a hot-air vent. The immediate experience of poverty by families in remote coastal communities, single parents in the urban core, and farmers on the Prairies is unaffected by whether poverty is defined absolutely or relatively, narrowly or broadly, by income or by consumption. However, the definition of poverty *is* consequential for these people insofar as social policies are or are not enacted based on levels and trends in poverty.

Social policy has a profound impact on the distribution of opportunities and rewards in Canada. Politics can reshape the distribution of income and the system of inequality by changing the laws governing people's right to own property, entitling people to various welfare benefits and redistributing income through tax policies. When politicians de-emphasize poverty, legislative efforts to maintain or expand welfare benefits and redistribute income are less likely. A definition of poverty that shows fewer Canadians living in poverty implies little need for government action. Conversely, politicians advocating for the poor can further their cause if the definition of poverty shows a large and growing proportion of people living in poverty.

Canada did not have an official definition of poverty until 2018 with the release of what the government billed as Canada's first-ever poverty-reduction strategy. The strategy's first objective is to establish an official poverty line using the market basket measure (MBM). The MBM takes into consideration the cost of a basket of goods and services that Canadians need to cover their basic needs and enjoy a reasonable standard of living. Items in the basket include healthy food, adequate clothing, shelter and transportation, a telephone, school supplies, and so on. Statistics Canada calculates the income needed to afford that basket, adjusted for household size and the area in which the household is found. In 2018, a single person living in Brandon, Manitoba, had to have a disposable annual income of $17 560.50 to remain above the poverty line, while a four-person family living in Toronto needed a disposable annual income of $42 101 (Statistics Canada, 2020d).

The second objective of Canada's poverty reduction strategy is to reduce the percentage of Canadians living below the MBM poverty line to 10 percent by 2020 and 6 percent by 2030. The government aims to achieve these targets by investing $22 billion in an enhanced Canada Child Benefit, a Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors, and the New Workers Benefit (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018). These targets as well as the MBM-based poverty line were enshrined in law in 2019. Many people were optimistic about reaching the 2030 goal when 2018 figures showed that 8.7 percent of Canadians lived in poverty (Statistics Canada, 2020g). However, we can expect an increase in poverty for a few years beginning in 2020 because of the financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notwithstanding the adoption of the MBM poverty line and the poverty-reduction strategy, debate continues. Anti-poverty group Campaign 2000 criticizes the MBM for treating items such as child care, prescription medicine, and Internet access as discretionary expenditures, that is, things a family could reasonably choose to do without. Campaign 2000 also notes that the government calculates discretionary expenditures based on a survey that does not sample people living in the territories or on First Nations reserves, precisely where poverty is most widespread in the country. Consequently, Campaign 2000 argues for a relative measure of poverty that would take such high-poverty areas into account. Doing so would double the estimated percentage of poor Canadians (Campaign 2000).

MYTHS ABOUT THE POOR

The language often used to refer to people living in poverty is revealing. For example, referring to someone as "poor but honest" implies that we view such a combination as so unlikely that people who have both characteristics are exceptions to the rule. Popular mythology also depicts people living in poverty—especially those who receive public assistance ("welfare")—as lazy, irresponsible, and lacking in motivation, abilities, and moral values. These images are potent, and they contribute to stereotypes of the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor (for example, war veterans and children versus "welfare bums" and people "looking for a handout"). However, research conducted in the past few decades shows that many of the stereotypes about people living in poverty are myths:

- **Myth 1:** *People are poor because they don't want to work.* This myth ignores that many people cannot work because of a disability or because they must care for their young children because of inadequate or inaccessible child-care facilities. This myth also ignores that many people who live in poverty actually work full-time, and many more work part-time. However, having a job is no guarantee of escaping poverty because of the low minimum wage set by provincial and territorial governments. In early 2020, the minimum wage varied from $11.32 in Saskatchewan to $15.00 in Alberta, with an unweighted provincial and territorial average of $12.90. Even if a person living in a large Canadian city worked 50 weeks at 40 hours a week for $11.32 an hour, he or she would earn only $25 800 a year—above the MBM cut-off for an unattached individual but below the MBM cut-off for a parent with a child in most of the country.
- **Myth 2:** *Most people living in poverty are immigrants.* Actually, only recent immigrants experience a poverty rate that is significantly higher than the poverty rate of the Canadian-born, and recent immigrants are only a small fraction of all Canadian immigrants. Moreover, after immigrants are established, they typically have a lower poverty rate than do people born in Canada (Green et al., 2016). In fact, established immigrants ages 45 to 64 who have been here for more than 20 years are on average wealthier than Canadian-born people of the same age (Morrissette, 2019).
- **Myth 3:** *Most poor people are trapped in poverty.* In reality, 80 percent of people with low income escape poverty in less than one year, while 92 percent of people with low income escape within two years (Statistics Canada, 2010b). We conclude that most people try to move out of difficult financial circumstances—and most succeed, at least for a time.

THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

The feminization of poverty is the theory that (1) women are more likely to be low-income earners than are men, and (2) the low-income gap between women and men is growing.

In the 1970s, feminist sociologists introduced the notion of the **feminization of poverty**, by which they meant that (1) women were more likely to be low-income earners than men were, and (2) the low-income gap between women and men was growing (Duffy and Mandell, 2011: 130–33).

The data suggest that while (1) is correct, (2) is not (Statistics Canada, 2012a, 2012b, 2013d, 2018b). Thus, in 1976, 14.6 percent of women and 11.5 percent of men were low-income earners—a difference of 3.1 percent. By 2015, the difference fell to 1.0 percent, the smallest gap since the data series began. This trend contradicts the view that the low-income gap between women and men is growing. Nonetheless, the gap between low-income women and men is real, and it is especially large among people in one-parent families and among the elderly.

The female–male gap is largely a function of women's position in the labour market compared to that of men. Women typically spend fewer years working in the paid labour force than men do because they assume the bulk of domestic and child-rearing responsibilities in most families. This means they usually accumulate smaller pensions and more modest savings than men do. When they are working in the paid labour force, women typically earn less than men do, again minimizing their savings and pensions. Moreover, relatively low wages for women means that the advantage of working for a wage as compared to collecting welfare is smaller for women than for men. Women are therefore more likely than men are to

collect welfare payments and sink into poverty. Finally, women live an average of four years longer than men do, so their financial resources have more time to deplete.

Explaining Poverty

Why do some people live in poverty? Answers to this question vary from individual-level to structural explanations.

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL EXPLANATIONS

Individual-level explanations focus on the attributes of poor people, asking how they differ from people who are not poor. This type of explanation focuses on causes that lie within the person. Using this logic, someone is poor because of a personal characteristic, such as low intelligence or a behaviour abnormality.

Some evidence suggests that individual *attributes* explain a small number of cases of poverty. For example, we know that people with a disability have a higher risk of living in poverty than others do. However, not all people with a disability live in poverty, and the vast majority of people living in poverty have no disability. On balance, this type of evidence teaches us that poverty is, for the most part, not a consequence of individual attributes, even though these attributes are important in some cases.

A related explanation focuses on the acquired *attitudes* of individuals, such as low self-esteem, lack of achievement motivation, and an inability to delay gratification. Using this logic, poverty persists because families who are poor employ child-rearing practices that teach and reinforce bad attitudes. A related version of this argument stresses a "culture of poverty," a way of thinking and acting that is supposedly shared by families who live in poverty. This culture presumably reinforces and perpetuates itself through inadequate upbringing and ill-formed personalities.

Two objections undermine this type of explanation. First, descriptions of poverty that stress a culture of depression, lack of hope, and fatalism may be accurate, but these states of mind are typically *effects* of poverty, not causes. Second, many poor people work, are religious, don't smoke or drink, and so on. Therefore, evidence that supports explanations founded on these personal deficits is often lacking.

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

Another type of explanation has greater currency in sociology. It stresses the *organization of the economy* as the principal cause of poverty. Capitalist economies feature cyclical booms and busts, periods of low unemployment and high profits followed by periods of high unemployment and low profits. During recessions, many people lose their jobs and fall into poverty. Moreover, people with minimum-wage jobs don't earn enough to escape poverty. The lack of good jobs is thus a major cause of poverty.

SOCIAL POLICY

Other analysts stress *social policy* as a factor affecting the poverty level (see Box 8.1). For example, as noted above, if you receive the current minimum hourly wage while working full-time, year-round, you might not escape poverty, especially if you have children to support. In this sense, minimum-wage legislation is a social policy that creates the working poor. Raising the minimum wage would eliminate the working poor. However, if the minimum wage were to rise too much or too quickly, so too might the level of unemployment; some employers might not be able to afford a sudden big jump in wages. This fact implies that the best time to raise the minimum wage is during periods of prosperity.

The tax system illustrates another way that policies affect poverty. In a progressive tax system, as incomes rise, a greater *proportion* of income is paid in tax. For example, those who earn $100 000 pay a larger percentage of their income as tax than do those who earn $50 000. In Canada, the income tax system is progressive but the overall tax system is not. Most Canadian families pay about the same percentage of their total income in tax. This situation occurs because two interrelated factors undermine the "Robin Hood" effect

BOX 8.1 Social Policy

SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDE A BASIC INCOME?

Giving more money to people who are poor would eliminate poverty, but the idea is often dismissed on the grounds that it would supposedly encourage laziness or, as economists put it, "disincentivize work" (Lowry, 2013). Would it? The Canadian government tried to find out by running the Mincome experiment between 1974 and 1979 in Dauphin, Manitoba (Forget, 2011). It gave Dauphin residents a guaranteed annual income. About one-third of the town's population received a monthly cheque to ensure they were above the poverty line. Overnight, Dauphin became a town with no poverty.

Teams of sociologists, economists, and anthropologists were sent out along with the cheques. Over four years, they collected a huge cache of data on work habits, family life, health concerns, educational performance, and community integration. What do the data show?

Initially, nothing. Just after data collection was finished, a Conservative government replaced the NDP and cancelled the project. The money stopped flowing and 1800 boxes of evidence were archived. Almost $100 million was spent supplementing incomes and gathering evidence, and we learned nothing.

In 2004, University of Manitoba professor Evelyn Forget asked the provincial archives to give her access to the Mincome data. After five years, she finally received permission. Here is a summary of what she found happened in Dauphin during the Mincome experiment (Bregman, 2016):

- School dropout rates declined and performance increased.
- Age at marriage increased. (The younger people are when they marry, the more likely they are to divorce.)
- Birth rates dropped.
- Hours worked declined, but insignificantly.
- Hospitalization rates declined substantially, as did domestic violence.

Similar results occurred in four later guaranteed income experiments in North America.

Decades after the ground breaking Mincome initiative, the world is taking note. Similar experiments have been conducted or are being conducted in five Western European countries, three African countries, Brazil, and India. In 2017, Ontario started research on the subject too, but it suffered the fate of Mincome: it was cancelled by the province's incoming Conservative government in 2018, too early to measure its potential in reducing poverty and offsetting poverty's financial burden on the health care and social welfare systems.

The universal feature of basic income is that it is unconditional; recipients are not obliged to work or look for work. Beyond that, two variants exist. In one variant, everyone receives the same amount of money. In the other, payments vary with need. The second variant is less expensive and is more widely supported by policy analysts (Forget, 2018).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Implementing a guaranteed annual income in Canada would be expensive, in the neighbourhood of $44 billion annually. What benefits might offset the cost?
2. What effect would a guaranteed annual income have on Canada's Gini coefficient?

of progressive income taxes. First, taxes other than income tax, such as property tax, the GST, and fuel taxes, are regressive, which means they are not based on the income of the taxpayer. You pay the same tax on a $100 chair as does David Thomson, Canada's richest man. Second, those who earn more are able to shelter much of their income from taxation in registered education savings plans and registered retirement savings plans, through tax exemptions on dividends and capital gains, and so on. As a result, the tax system does less to erode poverty than you might imagine.

IDEOLOGY

Finally, some sociologists stress ways of thinking, or ideology, as an explanation for poverty. Negative images of various groups lead to an undervaluing of the ways of life of some people, such as Indigenous people, recent immigrants, and members of visible minority groups. Discrimination follows from such undervaluation. Discrimination causes poverty because it leads to less success in finding good jobs.

Is poverty an inevitable feature of society? It may be, at least to the extent that inequality is known to exist in all societies. However, the extent of poverty in Canada could be reduced if we chose to follow the example of Western European countries. Many countries in Western Europe have poverty rates well below Canada's because their governments have established job-training and child-care programs that allow people who are living in poverty to take jobs with livable wages and benefits. This option is, however, clearly a political choice. Many Canadians argue that providing welfare benefits dampens the work ethic and perpetuates poverty. Although the Western European evidence does not support that view, Canadians do not currently seem to have the political will to change our social policies and thereby alleviate poverty.

Bearing in mind the patterns and trends that characterize social stratification in Canada, we now examine how sociologists have explained social stratification. We begin with Karl Marx, who formulated the first major sociological theory of stratification in the middle of the nineteenth century (Marx, 1904 [1859]; Marx and Engels, 1972 [1848]).

Time for Review

- What would the income quintile shares be for a society with a Gini index of 0? What would the income quintile shares be for a society with a Gini index of 1?
- How does social capital differ from financial capital? What social capital differences would you expect to find when comparing a public school with an exclusive private school?
- Imagine the Canadian government instituted a 100 percent inheritance tax. How would this tax affect the list of the richest people in Canada?
- Many people believe that there will always be people living in poverty. In light of this chapter's discussion of poverty, how credible is that claim?
- How do individual-level and structural explanations differ in terms of where they locate the primary causes of poverty?

Theories of Stratification

Conflict Perspectives

MARX

In medieval Western Europe, peasants worked small plots of land owned by landlords. Peasants were legally obliged to give their landlords a set part of the harvest and to continue working for them under any circumstance. In turn, landlords were required to protect peasants from marauders. They were also obliged to open their storehouses and feed the peasants if crops failed. This arrangement was known as **feudalism**.

Feudalism was a legal arrangement in preindustrial Europe that bound peasants to the land and obliged them to give their landlords a set part of the harvest. In exchange, landlords were required to protect peasants from marauders and open their storehouses to feed the peasants if crops failed.

According to Marx, by the late fifteenth century, several forces were beginning to undermine feudalism. Most important was the growth of exploration and trade, which increased the demand for many goods and services in commerce, navigation, and industry. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some urban craftspeople and merchants had opened small manufacturing enterprises and had saved enough capital to expand production. However, they faced a big problem: To increase profits they needed more workers. Yet the biggest potential source of workers—the peasantry—was legally bound to the land. Thus, if peasants were to become industrial workers, feudalism had to be destroyed. In Scotland, this happened when enterprising landowners recognized they could make more money raising sheep and selling wool than by having their peasants till the soil. They turned their cropland into pastures, forcing peasants off the land and into the cities. The former peasants had no choice but to take jobs as urban workers.

In Marx's view, relations between workers and industrialists first encouraged rapid technological change and economic growth. After all, industrial owners wanted to increase profits by adopting new and better tools, machines, and production methods. But such innovation had unforeseen consequences. First, some owners were forced to become members of the working class as they were driven out of business by more efficient competitors. Second, owners increased the size of factories while keeping wages as low as possible and investing as little as possible in improving working conditions. As a result, the ownership class grew richer and smaller while the working class grew larger and remained impoverished.

Class consciousness refers to being aware of membership in a class.

Marx believed that eventually workers would develop **class consciousness**, that is, awareness of belonging to the same, exploited class as their co-workers. Growing class consciousness would in turn encourage the formation of unions and workers' political parties. These organizations would ultimately seize state power and create a communist system, abolishing private ownership of property and therefore classes. (By "property," Marx meant economically productive property, such as factories and farmland.) According to Marx, people would then contribute to society to the best of their ability and receive from society whatever they needed.

Class, in Marx's sense of the term, is determined by a person's relationship to the means of production. In Weber's usage, class is determined by a person's "market situation."

Marx's theory includes several noteworthy points. First, according to Marx, a person's **class** is determined by the source of his or her income, or, to use Marx's term, by a person's "relationship to the means of production." For example, members of the capitalist class (or **bourgeoisie**) own the means of production, including factories, tools, and land. They do not do any physical labour. They are thus in a position to earn profits. In contrast, members of the working class (or **proletariat**) do physical labour. They do not own the means of production. They are thus in a position to earn wages. In Marx's view, classes are distinguished by their source of income, not by the amount of income they earn.

According to Marx, the **bourgeoisie** are owners of the means of production, including factories, tools, and land. They do not do any physical labour. Their income derives from profits.

A second noteworthy point about Marx's theory is that it recognizes more than two classes in any society. In particular, the **petite bourgeoisie** is a class of small-scale capitalists who own means of production but employ only a few workers or none at all. Their situation forces them to do physical work themselves. In Marx's view, as capitalism develops, members of the petite bourgeoisie are bound to disappear because they are economically inefficient. According to Marx, every economic era is characterized by just two great classes: landlords and serfs during feudalism, the bourgeoisie and proletariat during capitalism.

The **proletariat**, in Marx's usage, is the working class. Members of the proletariat do physical labour but do not own means of production. They are thus in a position to earn wages.

The **petite bourgeoisie**, in Marx's usage, is the class of small-scale capitalists who own means of production but employ only a few workers or none at all, forcing them to do physical work themselves.

CRITIQUE OF MARX

Marx's ideas strongly influenced the development of conflict theory. Today, however, sociologists generally agree that Marx did not accurately foresee some aspects of capitalist development:

- Rather than industrial societies becoming polarized into two opposed and conflicting classes, a large and heterogeneous middle class of "white-collar" workers emerged. This middle class includes non-manual employees and professionals. Many of them enjoy higher income and status than manual workers do and therefore have a bigger stake in capitalism. White-collar workers thus tend to act as a stabilizing force in society. To take account of these changes, some neo-Marxists recognize *two* main divisions in the social relations of work—between owners and non-owners, and between supervisors/managers and non-supervisors/managers. The class of supervisors and managers is sometimes called the "new middle class." Members of the new middle class take direction from owners and are responsible for coordinating the work of other employees (Clement and Myles, 1994).
- Although Marx correctly argued that investment in technology makes it possible for capitalists to earn large profits, he did not foresee that such investment would also make it possible for workers to earn higher wages and toil fewer hours under less oppressive conditions. Yet that is just what happened—and most workers tended to be appeased by improved living standards.
- Communism did not take root where industry was most highly developed, as Marx anticipated, but rather in semi-industrialized countries, such as Russia in 1917 and

China in 1949. Moreover, communism did not create classless societies. Instead, new forms of privilege emerged. Elite Communist Party members enjoyed luxurious country homes, free trips abroad, and scarce Western goods at reduced prices. According to a Russian quip from the 1970s, "Under capitalism, one class exploits the other, but under communism, it's the other way around."

- Businesspeople developed new ways to avert economic crises and prolong the life of capitalism by stimulating demand. To encourage people to buy more things, they began advertising, which created new "needs." To give people the means to buy new things they could not otherwise afford, businesspeople created easy credit. And to ensure that people frequently replaced the new things they bought, they started designing things to break down. Among the fruits of such "planned obsolescence" were light bulbs with mere 1000-hour lifespans, hosiery that developed runs after being worn just a few times, and inkjet printers containing a chip that made them die after printing a set number of pages.

WEBER

Writing in the early twentieth century, Max Weber foretold most of the developments outlined above. He did not think communism would create classlessness. He understood the significance of the growth of the middle class. Consequently, Weber developed a much different approach to social stratification from Marx's approach.

Weber, like Marx, saw classes as economic categories (Weber, 1946: 180–95). However, he did not think that class position was determined by a single criterion—ownership versus non-ownership of property. Class position, wrote Weber, is determined by a person's "market situation," including the individual's possession of goods, opportunities for income, level of education, and degree of technical skill. For Marx, class is a *relational* concept: Different classes reflect oppositional relationships to the means of production. For Weber, class is a *distributional* concept; gradations in class are associated with an individual's value in the marketplace.

According to Weber, society is divided into four main classes: large-property owners, small-property owners, employees who are relatively highly educated but do not own property, and manual workers who lack higher education and do not own property. Thus, in Weber's scheme, white-collar employees and professionals emerge as a large class.

If Weber broadened Marx's idea of class, he also recognized that two types of groups other than class have a bearing on the way a society is stratified: status groups and parties.

Status groups differ from one another in terms of their lifestyle and the prestige or social honour they enjoy. Consider members of a particular minority ethnic community who have recently immigrated. They may earn relatively high income but endure relatively low prestige. The longer-established members of the majority ethnic community may look down on the newcomers as vulgar "new rich." If their cultural practices differ from those of the majority ethnic group, their style of life may also become a subject of scorn. Thus, the position of the minority ethnic group in the social hierarchy does not derive only from its economic position but also from the esteem in which it is held.

Status groups differ from one another in terms of the prestige or social honour they enjoy and also in terms of their style of life.

According to Weber, **parties** are organizations that strive to impose their will on others. Moreover, control over parties, especially large bureaucratic organizations, does not depend solely on wealth or some other class criterion. For example, the head of a military, scientific, or other bureaucracy does not need to be rich, just as someone can be rich yet still endure low prestige (think of a successful criminal).

Parties, in Weber's usage, are organizations that seek to impose their will on others.

Weber argued that drawing an accurate picture of a society's stratification system involves analyzing classes, status groups, and parties as independent bases of social inequality. But to what degree are they independent of one another? Weber said that the importance of status groups as a basis of stratification is greatest in pre-capitalist societies. Under capitalism, classes and parties (especially bureaucracies) become the main bases of stratification.

FUNCTIONALISM

Marx and Weber were Germans who wrote their major works between the 1840s and the 1910s. Inevitably, their theories bear the stamp of the age in which they wrote. The next major developments in the field occurred in the United States in the mid-twentieth century. Just as inevitably, these innovations were coloured by the optimism, dynamism, and prejudices of that time and place.

The **functional theory of stratification** argues that (1) some jobs are more important than others are, (2) people must make sacrifices to train for important jobs, and (3) inequality is required to motivate people to undergo these sacrifices.

A **functional theory of stratification** was proposed by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore at the end of World War II (Davis and Moore, 1945). Davis and Moore noted that jobs differ in importance, with a judge's work, for example, contributing more to society than the work of a janitor. This discrepancy poses a challenge: How can people be motivated to complete the long training they need to become judges, physicians, engineers, and so on? Higher education is expensive, and you earn little money while training. In addition, studying long and hard means denying yourself entertainment and other pleasures. Clearly, the most talented people need incentives to be motivated to train for the most important jobs. According to David and Moore, the most efficient incentives are money and prestige. As a result, social stratification is necessary (or "functional"); people are motivated by the prospect of high rewards to undergo the required sacrifices to achieve a higher education. Substantial inequality, they conclude, motivates the most talented people to become judges, physicians, and so on.

Although the functional theory of stratification may appear reasonable, one of its main flaws becomes apparent when we conduct what Weber called a "thought experiment." Imagine a society with just two classes of people—physicians and farmers. One day, a rare and deadly virus strikes. Oddly, the virus attacks only the physicians. Within weeks, our imaginary society has no more doctors. Since the farmers no longer have access to remedies for their ailments, they are much worse off, living fewer years than their predecessors did. But their society continues to exist.

Now imagine the reverse. Again we have a society made up of only physicians and farmers, and again a rare and lethal virus strikes. This time, however, the virus attacks only the farmers. Within weeks, the physicians' stockpiles of food are depleted; after a few more weeks, they start dying of starvation. Physicians who try to become farmers catch the new virus and expire. Within months, society ceases to exist. Who, then, does the more important work, physicians or farmers? According to our thought experiment, farmers have the more important job, for without them there is no more society.

When considered from a historical perspective, it is evident that *none* of the jobs that Davis and Moore considered important would exist without the physical labour done by people in "unimportant" jobs. For example, in tribal societies, hunters and gatherers needed to produce enough for their own subsistence plus a surplus to feed, clothe, and house the shaman or witch doctor. Similarly, in the royal court in an agrarian society, serfs needed to produce enough for their own subsistence plus a surplus to sustain the royal family. Governments and religious authorities have taken surpluses from ordinary working people for thousands of years by means of taxes, tithes, and force. Among other things, these surpluses were used to establish the first institutions of higher learning, out of which modern universities developed. In short, without the surpluses produced by peasants and workers through the ages, we would not have doctors, judges, and all the rest.

The answer to the question of which occupations are most important is therefore unclear. Although most physicians earn more money and enjoy more prestige than most family farmers do today, that is not because their work is more important in any objective sense of the word. (On the question of why physicians and other professionals earn more than non-professionals do, see Chapter 16, Education).

A second problem with the functional theory of stratification is that it emphasizes how society discovers talent because of inequality—but ignores the pool of talent lying undiscovered because of inequality (Tumin, 1953). Perfectly capable adolescents may be forced to drop out of high school to help support themselves and their families or to forgo a postsecondary education because they can't afford it. Although inequality may encourage

the discovery of talent for those who can afford to take advantage of the opportunities available to them, inequality also prevents the discovery of talent for the rest.

Third, the functional theory of stratification fails to consider how one generation passes advantages to the next generation. The functional theory correctly emphasizes that talent and hard work often lead to high monetary gain. However, it is also true that parents are able to transfer wealth to their children regardless of their talent. For example, most of the largest personal fortunes in Canada were inherited. Even rich people who do not inherit large fortunes often start near the top of the stratification system. Bill Gates, for example, is one of the richest people in the world. He did not inherit his fortune. However, his father was a partner in one of the most successful law firms in Seattle. Gates himself went to the most exclusive and expensive private schools in the city, followed by a stint at Harvard. In the late 1960s, his high school was one of the first in the world to boast a computer terminal connected to a nearby university's mainframe. Gates's early fascination with computers dates from that period. Gates is without doubt a highly talented man, but surely the social advantages he was born with, and not just his talents, helped to elevate him to his present lofty status (Wallace and Erickson, 1992). An adequate theory of stratification must take inheritance into account while recognizing how inequality prevents the discovery of talent.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

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According to the functional theory of stratification, "important" jobs require more training than "less important" jobs. The promise of big salaries motivates people to undergo training. Therefore, the functionalists conclude, social stratification is necessary. As the text makes clear, however, one of the problems with the functional theory of stratification is that it is difficult to establish which jobs are important, especially when we take a historical perspective.

Time for Review

- What are the main arguments and criticisms of the Marxist view of stratification?
- According to Weber, what are the main social classes? How do social classes differ from status groups and parties?
- What are the main arguments and limitations of the functionalist view of stratification?

Social Mobility

Much of our discussion to this point has focused on how we describe inequality and explain its persistence. Now we take up a different, although related, set of questions. Is our position in the system of inequality fixed? To what extent, if at all, are we trapped in a disadvantaged social position or assured of maintaining an advantaged position? At birth, do all people have the same freedom to gain wealth and fame? Are opportunities equally accessible to everyone?

Sociologists use the term *social mobility* to refer to the dynamics of the system of inequality and, in particular, to movement up and down the stratification system. If we think about inequality as either a hierarchy of more or less privileged positions or a set of higher and lower social classes, an important question emerges: How much opportunity do people have to change their positions? Typically, change has been measured using one of two benchmarks: your first position in the hierarchy (your first full-time job) or

Intragenerational mobility is social mobility that occurs within a single generation.

Intergenerational mobility is social mobility that occurs between generations.

your parents' position in the hierarchy. Comparing your first job with your current job is an examination of occupational or **intragenerational mobility**. Comparing parents' occupations with their children's occupations is an examination of the inheritance of social position or **intergenerational mobility**.

Whichever benchmark is used, social mobility analysts are interested in the openness, or fluidity, of society. Open or fluid societies are characterized by greater equality of access to all positions in the hierarchy of inequality. Thus, in more open societies, regardless of your social origins, you are more likely to rise or fall to a position that reflects your capabilities. In contrast, in closed or rigid societies, your social origins determine where you are located in the hierarchy of inequality. In such societies, poverty begets poverty, wealth begets wealth; being born into a particular position is a life sentence. For example, in medieval Europe, laws ensured that peasants remained peasants and lords remained lords. In the Indian caste system, religion ensured that Brahmins remained Brahmins and untouchables remained untouchables.

More recently, societies have become more open in the sense that social origin does not completely determine someone's fate. Think about the changes in Canadian society over the last century. A mainly agrarian, resource-based economy was transformed into an advanced, postindustrial country. We have experienced substantial growth in well-paying occupations in finance, marketing, management, and the professions. To what extent have people from all walks of life, from all economic backgrounds, been able to benefit from this transformation? This question introduces a second, related theme to discussions of mobility—equality of opportunity.

In the 1950s and 1960s, proponents of the functional theory of stratification and human capital theory thought that equality of opportunity would become the rule. They reasoned that as more and more skilled jobs were created in the new economy, the best and the brightest would rise to the top to take those jobs and perform them diligently. We would then move from a society based on *ascription* to one based on *achievement*. In a system of inequality based on ascription, your family's station in life determines your own fortunes. In a system based on achievement, your own talents and hard work determine your lot in life. If you achieve good grades in school, you increase your chance of acquiring a professional or managerial job.

Other sociologists cautioned that this scenario of high social mobility might not follow from the transformation of the economy. They focused on the reproduction of inequality, emphasizing how advantaged families have long attempted to ensure that their offspring inherit their advantages (Collins, 1979). On the world stage, Blossfeld and Shavit (1993) demonstrated that in 11 of 13 advanced industrial countries, little evidence supports the view that greater equality of opportunity is associated with expanding education systems (Sweden and the Netherlands were the two exceptions). In short, the openness or fluidity of the system of inequality did not increase over the last half of the twentieth century.

Socioeconomic status (SES) combines data on income, education, and occupational prestige in a single index of a person's position in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

Richard Wanner (1999) tested these ideas using Canadian data. He set himself the task of examining whether the growth of education—more high schools, colleges, and universities—benefited people from all social backgrounds equally. He reasoned that if ascription is weaker now than in previous decades, then parents' **socioeconomic status (SES)**—an index combining data on income, education, and occupational prestige—should now have less effect on a child's education than it once had. If in earlier decades the chances of children from disadvantaged families going to university were small, then, in more recent decades, as ascription weakened, these chances should have increased. As measures of socioeconomic background, Wanner used mother's and father's education and father's occupation. He tested his central question by using detailed information from a representative sample of 31 500 Canadians.

Wanner found that class-based ascription still operates strongly. Despite the fact that more Canadians are acquiring more years of schooling and more degrees than ever before, the long arm of family socioeconomic background continues to exert a strong hold on educational attainment. The link has not weakened between family advantage and children's educational achievement.

Explanations for how and why this link remains strong remain a matter of controversy (Davies, 1999). The school system has become increasingly differentiated. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to predominate in high-school vocational programs and college diploma programs. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds typically attend university. Also, new high-school programs have proliferated, including storefront schools for "at-risk" students in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, language-immersion streams, private schools, and enriched learning tracks. Each of these types of schools tend to enrol students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In other words, educational opportunities are now more numerous for everyone, but they are highly stratified and therefore tend to perpetuate inequalities rather than erase them.

To emphasize this point, sociologists distinguish "equality of opportunity" from "equality of condition." Equality of opportunity focuses on the chances of participation, while equality of condition focuses on the chances of succeeding. Both forms of equality are connected to social class. Not only do students from lower economic classes experience restricted access to certain types of schooling, but they have weaker supports for taking advantage of available opportunities (Reardon, 2011; see Box 8.2). We may all be able to enter a race, but if you come with track shoes and good coaching and I come with boots and no coaching, your chances of winning are higher, assuming we have equal athletic skills.

IS ATTAINING THE CANADIAN DREAM POSSIBLE?

One definition of the Canadian Dream is experiencing a high rate of intergenerational mobility—that is, attaining a higher standard of living than your parents did. How much intergenerational mobility is there in Canada? How does the level of intergenerational mobility in Canada compare with that in other countries? How likely is it that you will attain the Canadian Dream as we have defined it?

To answer these questions, we can calculate an index of intergenerational income mobility ranging from 0 to 1 (Conference Board of Canada, 2020). Think of the index as a kind of anchor. The heavier the anchor (the closer the index value is to 1.0), the more likely it is that parents' economic standing will weigh down their children, so the children won't be able to rise much above their parents' income level. The lighter the anchor (the closer the index value is to 0), the *less* likely it is that parents' economic standing will weigh down their children, so the children *will* be able to rise much above their parents' income level.

Canada's index value is 0.2. This means that if a parent earns $10 000 a year below the average income, the child is likely to earn $2000 less than the average income. As

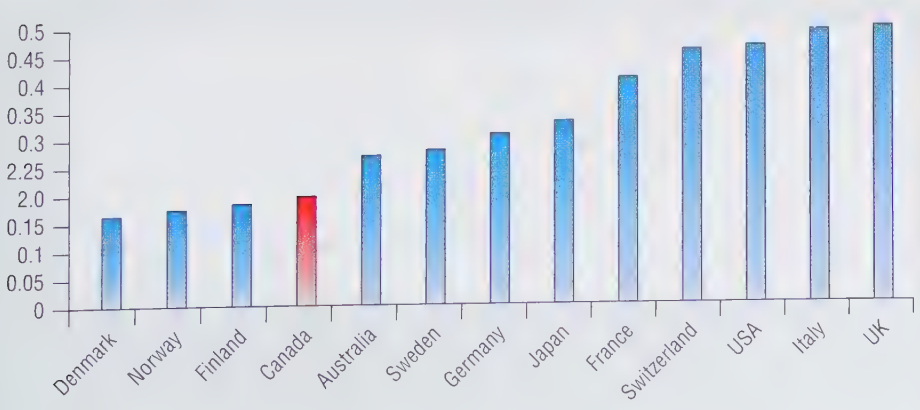


FIGURE 8.6
Index of Intergenerational Income Mobility, 13 Rich Countries (higher bars = less mobility)

Source: Conference Board of Canada (2020)

BOX 8.2 Sociology and the Media

THE GRIZZLIES

Kugluktuk (population, 1400) lies above the Arctic Circle in the western corner of Nunavut. It boasts an abundance of wildlife, including seal, fox, wolf, fish, and grizzly bear. These riches enabled the region's Copper Inuit to sustain themselves for millennia.

The residential school system arrived late, expanding in the North just as it was beginning to be phased out in the south. Given the size of the Arctic region, family separation sometimes lasted many years and left a legacy of alcoholism, family violence, and one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

In the widely acclaimed *The Grizzlies*, which movingly recounts actual events, Saskatchewan-born Russ Sheppard takes a short-term high school teaching job in Kugluktuk. Like most outsiders, he arrives wholly unprepared for the stark realities facing his students. Deeply impoverished, most students attend school infrequently and never graduate. Kyle sleeps in a dumpster to escape abuse at the hands of his father. Spring is beaten up by her boyfriend, who commits suicide shortly after. Zach is rarely seen at school, instead spending time on seal trap lines helping his grandparents, who face starvation without him. All these students are the offspring of first and second generation residential school survivors, many of whom drink to escape their trauma.

Think about life from the students' perspective. Education serves little purpose because opportunities to put it to use don't exist, and the very idea of school is associated with White domination and the sexual or physical abuse of your parents. Sheppard sees in the students something he saw in himself just a few years earlier: a sense of despair and a loss of hopes and dreams, in his case the chance to become a football player, derailed by an injury.

Sheppard found solace and a new sense of purpose in lacrosse, a sport invented by Indigenous people centuries ago, so he arranges to have equipment flown into the community and convinces the reluctant group to form a team, The Grizzlies. As their motivation picks up,

The Canadian Press

Sheppard suggests taking the Grizzlies team to the Canadian championships in Toronto—on condition that the students attend classes regularly and refrain from using alcohol or drugs.

Spoiler alert: If you expect to see the team win the championship in typical sports movie fashion, you'll be disappointed. They get trounced. The effects of the socioeconomic divide between youth who enjoyed a childhood filled with sports lessons and school athletic programs, and those who did not, become clear. Nonetheless, The Grizzlies return home in a triumphant mood. The rate of substance use and suicide in Kugluktuk declines. Today, The Grizzlies play on, and their program has been adopted in Indigenous communities across the country. Meanwhile, several players depicted in the movie graduated, found jobs in government and industry, and formed families of their own.

The film's producers (two of whom are Inuit) were careful not to apply the common "White saviour" storyline in the film. Sheppard helps set the stage for the students to improve their lives by giving them a tool that enables them to form group solidarity, make plans for the future, and develop resilience, the capacity to withstand adversity.

A pivotal scene in the movie occurs at a town meeting when the fate of the trip is uncertain after a sponsor pulls out. The town council initially denies the group's funding request, arguing that the tournament is just a holiday that is of no benefit to the community. When all is nearly lost, Zach's grandparents, two respected Elders, enter the room. They convince the council to change its decision. They are members of the last generation to know traditional Inuit life, before White officials killed their dogsled teams and forced them to submit to the new order. They lost their son because of his years in a residential school. Since then, they have rejected formal education. Yet the grandmother tells the council her people must now adapt or die. She recognizes that the educational opportunities enjoyed by other young Canadians have become a necessary condition for the survival of Inuit. The Grizzlies are thus allowed to win something incalculably more important than the championship in Toronto.

Critical Thinking Questions

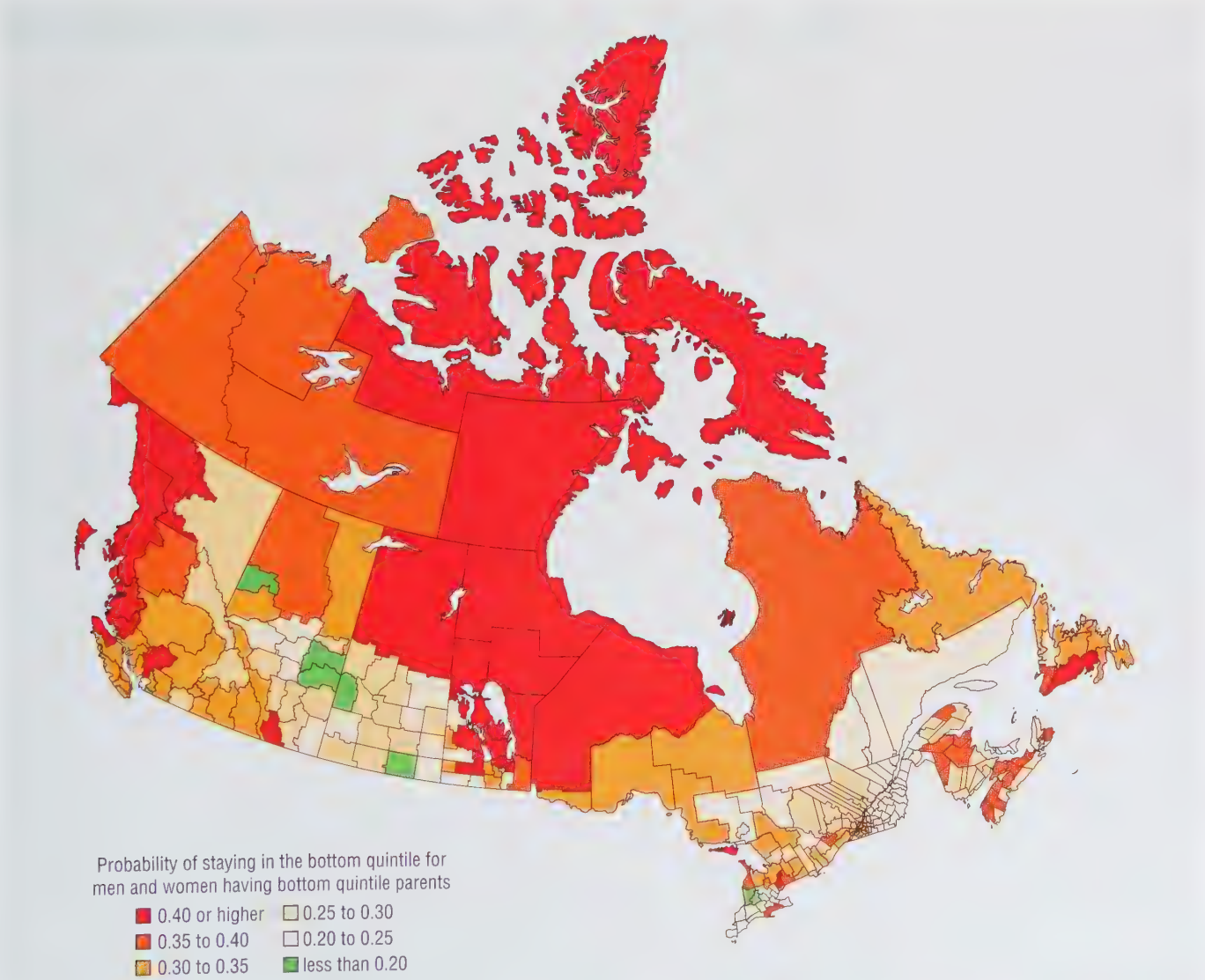
1. How do the concepts of equality of opportunity and equality of condition figure in *The Grizzlies*?
2. How might educational opportunities for Inuit be increased in the North?

Figure 8.6 shows, Canada's anchor is pretty light compared to the anchors in most other rich countries. The anchor is heaviest in the United States, Italy, and the United Kingdom. In those countries, if a parent earns $10 000 a year below the average income, the child is likely to earn between $4600 and $5000 less than the average income.

Within Canada, place of birth also anchors people to varying levels of income mobility. Figure 8.7 shows how the anchor's weight varies across census divisions. The areas with the heaviest anchors are shaded red. In these low-mobility areas, children born to parents in the bottom quintile of income earners have a 40 percent chance or higher of earning adult incomes in the bottom quintile of income earners. The areas with the lightest anchors are shaded green. In these high-mobility areas, children born to parents in the bottom quintile of income earners have less than a 20 percent chance of earning adult incomes in the bottom quintile of income earners.

FIGURE 8.7

Intergenerational Low Income in Canada


Probability of staying in the bottom quintile for men and women having bottom quintile parents
0.40 or higher
0.35 to 0.40
0.30 to 0.35
0.25 to 0.30
0.20 to 0.25
less than 0.20

Source: Miles Corak, "The Canadian Geography of Intergenerational Income Mobility," The Economic Journal, 29 May 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/uez019

Finally, we note that young people are especially likely to experience limited upward mobility if they enter the job market during a recession, a period of declining economic activity (Harvey and Kalwa, 1983). During a recession, unemployment increases, making it more difficult to find a job. Young people who do find a job must often take work below the level for which they are trained. When the economic downturn ends and employment picks up, employers are inclined to hire not the young people who have been unemployed or underemployed for a few years but a still more junior cohort of young people, who tend to be better trained and more willing to work for lower wages. Thus, young people who enter the job market during a recession are likely to experience relatively low upward mobility over their entire careers. The global recession of 2008–09 created a cohort of job market entrants, many of them with university and college degrees, who soon realized they may never achieve the economic successes of their parents' generation (Elliot Smith, 2012). The economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may have a similar effect on people who entered the job market in 2020–22.

Time for Review

- What does social mobility research tell us about the extent of upward mobility in Canada?
- What are the implications of social mobility research for functionalist theory?
- Which areas of the country have low intergeneration income mobility? Which areas of the country have high intergeneration income mobility? What accounts for these differences?

Perceptions of Class Inequality

An 18-country survey conducted in the mid-1990s found that Canadians were among the most likely to disagree with the view that large differences in income are necessary for national prosperity. Why then did Canadians think inequality persists? One question asked respondents how strongly they agree or disagree with the view that "inequality continues because it benefits the rich and powerful." Most Canadians agreed with that statement. Only about one-quarter of them disagreed with it in any way. Another question asked respondents how strongly they agree or disagree with the view that "inequality continues because ordinary people don't join together to get rid of it." Again, most Canadians agreed, with less than one-third disagreeing in any way (Pammett, 1997: 77–8).

Despite widespread awareness of inequality and considerable dissatisfaction with it, most Canadians in the survey were opposed to the government playing an active role in reducing inequality. Most did not want government to provide citizens with a basic income. They tended to oppose government job-creation programs. They even resisted the idea that government should reduce income differences through taxation (Pammett, 1997: 81).

Some observers speculate that the COVID-19 pandemic may result in many Canadians reducing their opposition to government playing a more energetic role in reducing inequality. After all, in less than two months, by late April 2020, the federal government had invested more than $817 billion to protect Canadians' health and support individuals and businesses financially (Roman, 2020). To put that amount in perspective, it's nearly one-fifth more than the government spent during all of 2018 and 2019 combined. Most Canadians strongly approved of the government's response to the crisis, recognizing that without such strong government intervention, the death toll and the economic fallout would have been far more serious, especially for low-income Canadians (Ipsos, 2020).

Whether enthusiasm for government intervention persists after the threat of COVID-19 subsides remains to be seen. However, the earlier-noted tendency for recession-era job entrants to endure an economic penalty throughout their careers at least suggests where such enthusiasm is likely to be found.

Time for Review

- What were the main features of Canadian attitudes toward inequality in the mid-1990s?
- How and why might these attitudes have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Summary

1. **How is economic inequality measured?**
   Standard measures of economic inequality are based on income quintile shares. One measure compares the income quintile share of the top 20 percent of families to that of the bottom 20 percent. A second measure is the Gini index, which ranges from 0 (perfect equality, where each household earns the same amount) to 1 (perfect inequality, where one household earns all income).

2. **How has the level of income inequality changed over time, and how does Canada's level of income inequality compare to that in other rich countries?**
   In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the level of income inequality in Canada increased substantially. Income inequality is lower in Canada than in the United States but considerably higher than in many Western European countries.

3. **What types of capital contribute to economic success?**
   Capital refers to useful assets. Everyone is endowed with some measure of natural talent, which is magnified by effort and cultivated through education and training to form *human capital*. The transformation of human capital is enhanced through the social networks that compose *social capital* and the social skills (including manners and tastes) that compose *cultural capital*.

4. **What are the key characteristics of poverty in Canada?**
   According to Canada's official measure of poverty, the percentage of poor Canadians has fallen in recent years. However, antipoverty groups prefer alternative measures that indicate a much higher level of poverty than the official figure. Several myths surround poverty, including the idea that those living in poverty lack motivation, are mostly immigrants, and stay poor for extended periods. Structural explanations provide better accounts of poverty than do individualistic explanations.

5. **What are the main differences between Marxist, Weberian, and functionalist theories of stratification?**
   Marx's theory of stratification distinguishes classes on the basis of their role in the productive process. It predicts inevitable conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the birth of a communist system. Weber distinguished between classes based on their "market relations." His model of stratification included four main classes: large-property owners, small-property owners, employees who are highly educated but do not own property, and manual workers who lack higher education and do not own property. He argued that class consciousness may develop under some circumstances but is by no means inevitable. Weber also emphasized prestige and power as important non-economic sources of inequality. Davis and Moore's functional theory of stratification argues that (1) some jobs are more important than others, (2) people need to make sacrifices to train for important jobs, and (3) inequality is required to motivate people to undergo these sacrifices. In this sense, stratification is functional.

6. What is social mobility?

Social mobility is movement up or down the stratification system, either within a generation (intragenerational mobility) or between generations (intergenerational mobility). Societies have experienced increased upward social mobility in recent centuries. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, some sociologists expected there to be more upward social mobility than was subsequently observed. Despite vastly increased opportunities for education, the tendency of different strata of the population to attend different types of educational institutions has limited the amount of upward social mobility in Canada. Still, the rate of intergenerational mobility in Canada is among the highest in rich countries.

7. How do Canadians view the structure of inequality in Canada?

In the mid-1990s, most Canadians believed that large inequalities are not necessary to achieve national prosperity. Most Canadians also believed that inequality persists because it serves the interests of the most advantaged members of society and because those who are disadvantaged do not join together to change things. At the same time, most Canadians disapproved of government intervention to lower the level of inequality. These attitudes may have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic because the public generally approved of the way in which the government protected the income security of Canadians in the face of unprecedented economic slowdown and job losses.

9 Globalization, Inequality, and Development

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Describe how globalization occurs as people and institutions across the planet become increasingly aware of, and dependent on, one another.
- Explain how globalization creates a world that is more homogeneous in some ways and more localized in others.
- Analyze change in the magnitude of inequality on a world scale.
- Assess competing explanations for the persistence of global inequality.
- Identify differences between countries that have recently emerged from poverty and those that have not.
- Describe how the disadvantages of globalization can be minimized.

The Creation of a Global Village

Suppose you want to travel to Europe. You begin by checking the Web to find the least expensive plane ticket. You then find your passport and perhaps download a guidebook to your mobile device. Depending on how organized you are, you might spend a lot of time researching and planning for your trip, or you might just pack your passport, your ticket, a backpack full of clothes, and your credit card and embark on an adventure.

How different things were in 1980. Then, most people went to see a travel agent when planning a trip. They had to ensure they not only had a valid passport but also visas, which were required for more countries than is the case today. Obtaining a visa involved visiting an embassy or a consulate or mailing in your passport and waiting for days or even weeks to receive the visa.

The next step in organizing the European trip would have involved standing in line at the bank to speak to a teller to withdraw funds from your bank account. Automated teller machines (ATMs) were rare. Next, you had to visit a different company to purchase traveller's cheques because banks did not sell them. You needed local currency when you arrived in Europe, but you could buy it only from large banks and money-changers. Few students had credit cards in 1980, and even if you had one, you could use it only in large stores and restaurants in big cities. Options were limited if you ran out of cash and traveller's cheques while travelling. You could try to convince another Canadian tourist to take your personal cheque, or you could spend a lot of time and money finding a special telephone for international calls, phoning home, and having someone wire money to a major bank for you. Today, even small European towns accept credit cards and ATM cards for shopping and restaurant bills. If you need local currency, ATMs automatically convert your dollars when you withdraw money from your home bank account or charge it to your credit card.

Most European cities and towns today have many North American-style supermarkets. Social interaction with Europeans is easier because many speak at least a bit of English. It is difficult to get very far from a McDonald's, and you can easily receive news and entertainment from back home through the Internet. Travelling in Europe was very different in 1980. Each country had its own distinct shopping experience and few people spoke English. It was next to impossible to find North American fast-food outlets or news from North America, other than the *International Herald-Tribune*, which was available only in larger towns and cities. TV shows were mostly local, and even if a North American show was broadcast, it would be dubbed in the local language.

Clearly, the world seems a much smaller place today than it did in 1980. Some people call it a "global village." But what exactly does that mean? Does a global village benefit everyone, or does it also have a downside?

The Triumphs and Tragedies of Globalization

Globalization occurs as people become increasingly aware of, and dependent on, one another.

As our imaginary trip suggests, **globalization** has linked people and made them more dependent on one another over the past four decades. Consider these facts (and see Table 9.1):

- International telecommunication has become easy and inexpensive. In 1930, a three-minute New York–London phone call cost more than $300 in today's US dollars, and

Currency conversion, then and now

Alina555/iStock

Capricorn Studio/Shutterstock

	1981–82	2018–19
International tourist arrivals (millions of people)	277	1400
Foreign direct investment (billions of dollars)	$59	$1097
Internet hosts	213	1.01 billion
International organizations	14 273	72 500

TABLE 9.1

Indicators of Globalization, 1981–82 to 2018–19

Sources: Brym and Lie (2005 [2003]: 240); OECD (2019); Internet Systems Consortium (2019); Union of International Associations (2019); World Tourism Organization (2019)

only a minority of North Americans had telephones in their homes. In 2020, you can talk for free on Skype for as long as you want to anyone who has an Internet connection.

- Although the world's population increased 73 percent between 1981–82 and 2018–19, the number of international tourists increased 407 percent.
- Worldwide investment across national borders (called *foreign direct investment*) increased by an astonishing 1759 percent from 1981–82 to 2018–19.
- The number of international organizations and agreements has increased dramatically. For example, about 14 000 international organizations existed in 1981; there were more than five times as many by 2018–19. (When individual nation-states join international organizations or sign international agreements, they give up some of their independence and autonomy. For example, by entering the Canada-USA-Mexico Agreement in 2020, the three countries agreed to settle trade disputes by means of a tribunal with members from all three countries.)
- In 1981, there were 213 Internet hosts. In 2018–19, there were 1.01 billion. They connect 4.5 billion people from around the world through social media, email, file transfers, websites, and videoconferencing.

Imperialism is the economic domination of one country by another.

The benefits of the rapid movement of capital, commodities, culture, and people across national boundaries should be clear from comparing our imaginary trips to Europe today and 40 years ago. What was a struggle for a North American traveller four decades ago is easy today. In this and many other ways, globalization has transformed and improved the way we live.

Yet globalization has its downside. Overwhelming inequality remains between rich and poor countries. In some respects, it is increasing. Rather than spreading wealth, globalized industries and technologies are turning the world into a more unequal place. Some anti-globalization activists argue that globalization is a form of **imperialism** that allows some countries to dominate others economically, politically, and culturally. In addition, many people oppose globalization because of its negative effect on local cultures and the natural environment.

One negative aspect of globalization with which we are all too familiar was anticipated a decade ago in Steven Soderberg's *Contagion*, starring Matt Damon, Kate Winslet, Jude Law, and Gwyneth Paltrow (available on Netflix). At the end of the movie we learn exactly how the worldwide pandemic dramatized in the movie originated: A bulldozer clears trees from virgin forest in China, causing bats to take flight. One bat finds a place of rest in a pigsty. While hanging from a crossbeam, the bat's droppings fall into a pig's feeder. The pig eats. The pig is then sold and winds up in the kitchen of an upscale restaurant

We are all connected.

ronemmons/Shutterstock

None of this is known at the outset. All we see at the beginning of the movie is Gwyneth Paltrow merrily drinking alcohol and ordering pork at the restaurant. At the airport on her way home to her family in the United States, she develops a temperature but still arranges to meet her lover during a stopover in London. Paltrow soon dies, but it doesn't take long before millions are infected around the world. If the origin of the disease in *Contagion* sounds familiar, it's because COVID-19 is widely believed to have originated in a similar fashion.

Notice where globalization intrudes into the story: International investment promotes economic development that introduces a new form of animal-human contact which, in turn, spreads because of the ease with which people form international relationships and travel internationally. The fundamental cause of the virus in *Contagion*, and in the real-life case of COVID-19, was globalization.

In the next section, we first explore what globalization is and how it affects our everyday lives. We trace the global movement of a familiar commodity, athletic shoes, to demonstrate the impact of globalization and underscore the many ways in which individuals from different corners of the world are connected. Next, we examine the causes of globalization, focusing on political, economic, and technological factors. We then analyze whether globalization is compelling different parts of the world to become more similar, and how globalization creates its own opposition. Finally, we take a longer view and examine the roots of globalization historically.

Our second task in this chapter is to explore the nature and causes of global inequality. We note that the gap between rich and poor countries is wide and, according to some measures, is getting wider. We then review the major theories that attempt to explain global inequality and conclude that poor countries are not fated to remain poor. We close by discussing what people can do to reduce global inequality and poverty.

Time for Review

- What is globalization?
- What contrasting effects has globalization had on different categories of people?

The Sources and Contours of Globalization

Globalization in Everyday Life

A **global commodity chain** is a worldwide network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity.

When we purchase a commodity, we often access a **global commodity chain** that is made up of a worldwide "network of labour and production processes, whose end result is a finished commodity" (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1986: 159).

To better understand global commodity chains, consider how one commodity, athletic shoes, connects consumers and producers. Until the 1970s, most sports shoes were manufactured in the United States. Today, corporations such as Nike produce all their shoes abroad to take advantage of low labour costs. When governments eliminated many of the laws, regulations, and taxes that acted as barriers to foreign investment and trade, Nike and other manufacturers moved their plants overseas. The result was a new global division of labour, with high-wage management, finance, design, and marketing services concentrated in the United States and other developed countries, and low-wage manufacturing located in less developed, industrializing countries (see Chapter 13, Political Economy). Many large corporations, including General Motors and General Electric, closed some or all of their plants in the United States and Canada (high-wage countries) and set up factories in Mexico, Indonesia, and other developing economies.

Nike workers make only about 90 cents an hour in Indonesia, so the labour cost for a $199.99 pair of Zoom KD 12 basketball shoes is less than $2. While Indonesian workers are

contracted to work 48 hours a week, compulsory overtime often means that they work up to 60 hours per week. Beatings and sexual harassment by managers are common and well documented. Indonesian workers tried to form a union but the organizers were fired and the military was brought in to restore order. Michael Jordan hasn't played in the NBA since 2003, but in 2018 he still collected US$130 million from Nike's Jordan Brand, equal to the annual wages of nearly 10 000 Indonesian workers in Nike factories (Badenhausen, 2019; LaFeber, 1999; Putterman, 2019).

When consumers buy a pair of Nike athletic shoes, they become part of a global commodity chain. Although the buyers do not create the social relations that exploit Indonesian labour and enrich basketball stars, it is difficult to deny the buyers' role, however small, in helping those social relations persist (see Box 9.1).

BOX 9.1 Social Policy

CAN WORK CONDITIONS BE IMPROVED IN CLOTHING FACTORIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES?

Chances are that most of the clothes you wear come from China, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. In these countries, labour is relatively inexpensive, environmental and safety standards are comparatively lax, and out of economic necessity, poorly paid workers (mainly women, some of them children) routinely work much longer hours than they do in Canada. We want inexpensive clothing, so most of us prefer not to think much about who makes our clothes and how the workers are treated.

Yet at around 9 a.m. on April 24, 2013, when a clothing factory collapsed near Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital, Canadians did notice. So did the rest of the world. Some 1132 people died and more than 2500 were injured because of shoddy building construction, ineffective safety inspections, overcrowding, the desire of the factory owner and Western companies to maximize profits, and Western demand for inexpensive clothing.

After the tragedy, some Western companies, the Bangladeshi government, and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association vowed to compensate the families of the victims and improve working conditions in the country's garment factories (Hossain, 2013). A European-led safety accord was signed by H&M, Zara, and Fast Retailing (Asia's biggest retailer). Other companies, including Walmart, Target, Gap, and Canada's Loblaws (which sells Joe Fresh clothing, made in the collapsed factory) adopted their own initiatives to tighten safety regulations and improve working conditions.

The Rana Plaza factory collapse, Bangladesh, April 24, 2013

© ANDREW BIRAJ/Reuters

In the rubble, a garment destined for Canadian buyers

It remains to be seen how many improvements these promises will yield. However, it is worth remembering that in the two years after 146 Jewish and Italian immigrant women died in the notorious 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City, the public outcry and union pressure resulted in 60 new laws being passed, improving safety conditions in the city's factories. It is a sad reflection on the human condition that we must often witness mass death before we are motivated to make the world a better place.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How do you fit into global commodity chains?
2. Why are most Canadians willing to support poor labour conditions in Asian garment factories by buying clothes and footwear manufactured there?

Sociology makes us aware of the complex web of social relations and interactions in which we are embedded. The sociological imagination allows us to link our biography with history and social structure (see Box 9.2). Globalization extends the range of that linkage, connecting our biography with global history and global social structure.

The Sources of Globalization

Although social scientists disagree on the exact causes of globalization, most of them stress its roots in technological, political, and economic change.

TECHNOLOGY

Technological progress has allowed us to quickly and inexpensively move goods and information over long distances. Commercial airplanes radically shortened the amount of time required for international travel, and the cost of international travel plunged after the 1950s. Similarly, a range of methods of communication, including telephone, fax, and email, allow us to inexpensively and almost instantly contact people around the globe. It is difficult to conceive how globalization would be possible without modern technology.

POLITICS

Although globalization could not occur without advanced technology, advanced technology on its own does not lead to globalization. Consider the differences between North Korea and South Korea. You are likely familiar with major South Korean companies like Hyundai and Samsung, and you may know people from South Korea or Korean Canadians. However, even though we have access to the technology required to communicate with both Koreas, nobody but academic experts on North Korea have much contact with that country and its people. Canada has long enjoyed strong relations with South Korea; a free-trade agreement between the two countries came into force in 2015. However, we extended diplomatic recognition to North Korea only in 2001. As of 2019, Canada had not opened an embassy there, and there is no trade between the two countries. Why? It's all about politics. South Korea and Canada have been allies since the Korean War in the early 1950s, and South Korea has pursued political, economic, and cultural integration with the outside world. In contrast, North Korea has remained isolated from the rest of the world in an attempt to maintain its authoritarian political system and communist economic system. As this example shows, politics plays an important role in determining a country's level of globalization.

ECONOMICS

Finally, economics is an important source of globalization. As discussed in our review of global commodity chains and the new international division of labour, industrial capitalism is focused on finding new markets, making higher profits, and lowering labour costs. Capitalist competition has been a significant catalyst for international integration (Gilpin, 2001; Stopford and Strange, 1991).

Transnational corporations—also called multinational or international corporations—are the chief agents of globalization in the world today. They differ from traditional corporations in five ways (Gilpin, 2001; LaFeber, 1999):

1. Traditional corporations rely on domestic labour and domestic production. Transnational corporations depend increasingly on foreign labour and foreign production.
2. Traditional corporations extract natural resources or manufacture industrial goods. Transnational corporations increasingly emphasize skills and advances in design, technology, and management.
3. Traditional corporations sell to domestic markets. Transnational corporations depend on world markets.
4. Traditional corporations rely on established marketing and sales outlets. Transnational corporations depend on massive advertising campaigns.
5. Traditional corporations work with or under national governments. Transnational corporations are increasingly autonomous from national governments.

Transnational corporations are large businesses with head offices in rich countries. They rely increasingly on foreign labour and foreign production; skills and advances in design, technology, and management; world markets; and massive advertising campaigns. They are increasingly autonomous from national governments.

Technological, political, and economic factors work together as sources of globalization. For example, governments often promote economic competition to help transnational corporations win global markets. Consider Philip Morris, the company that introduced Marlboro cigarettes in 1954 (Barnet and Cavanagh, 1994). Partly because of the success of the company's advertising campaign, Marlboro soon became the bestselling cigarette in the United States. The Marlboro Man became one of the most widely recognized icons in American advertising by symbolizing the rugged individualism of the American frontier. Although Philip Morris was the smallest of the country's six largest tobacco companies in 1954, the popularity of the Marlboro Man helped it become the country's biggest tobacco company by the 1970s.

John Van Hasselt/Sygma/Getty Images

In the mid-1990s, cigarette sales were declining in the United States and American cigarette manufacturers saw Asia as the new frontier for sales.

In the 1970s, domestic sales began to slump as a result of the anti-smoking campaign. In an effort to improve sales, Philip Morris and other tobacco companies began to globalize. However, slick advertising was not enough to win global markets for US cigarettes. Tobacco companies also needed political influence to make cigarettes one of the country's biggest and most profitable exports. To achieve that goal, the US trade representative in the Reagan administration, Clayton Yeutter, worked diligently to dismantle trade barriers in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. He threatened legal action for breaking international trade law, and vowed to restrict Asian imports unless these countries allowed the sale of US cigarettes. These political actions were critically important in the bid to globalize world trade in cigarettes. In 1986, the commercial counsellor of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, wrote to the public affairs manager of Philip Morris Asia, stating: "I want to emphasize that the embassy and the various US government agencies in Washington will keep the interests of Philip Morris and the other American cigarette manufacturers in the forefront of our daily concerns" (quoted in Frankel, 1996). As this case demonstrates, economics and politics typically work hand in hand to globalize the world.

A World Like the United States?

It is clear that globalization links people around the world, often in ways that are not immediately obvious. It is also clear that closely connected technological, economic, and political forces are the major sources of globalization. Now let us consider one of the consequences of globalization: the degree to which globalization is homogenizing the world and, in particular, making the whole world look like the United States, which accounts for about one-quarter of the world economy.

Much impressionistic evidence supports the view that globalization homogenizes societies. Many economic and financial institutions around the world now operate similarly. For example, the economic guidelines for developing countries imposed by transnational organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are similar to those governing advanced industrial countries. Similarly, international ideals of democracy, representative government, and human rights are based on Western ideas. Finally, in the cultural realm, American icons circle the planet: basketball, Hollywood movies, Disney characters, Coca-Cola, MTV, CNN, McDonald's, and so on.

Indeed, **McDonaldization** is a term commonly used to describe the homogenizing effects of globalization. Sociologist George Ritzer (1996: 1) defines McDonaldization as "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world." The idea of McDonaldization extends Weber's concept of rationalization, the application of the most efficient means to achieve given ends (Chapter 3, Culture). According to Ritzer, McDonaldization has led to the expansion of the values of efficiency, calculability, and

McDonaldization is a form of rationalization. It refers to the spread of the principles of fast-food restaurants—efficiency, predictability, and calculability—to all spheres of life.

predictability to practically every aspect of life. Significantly, most of McDonald's business takes place outside the United States, with restaurants in almost every country around the world. McDonaldization has come to stand for the global spread of values associated with the United States and its business culture.

However, claims about how globalization homogenizes the world should be taken with a grain of salt. Recall the main arguments of symbolic interactionism: People create their social circumstances and do not merely react to them. They negotiate their identities and do not easily settle for identities imposed on them by others. In light of these arguments, shouldn't we suspect that the creep of North American values is perhaps not as widespread as some globalization theorists claim? Is it not likely that people will adapt North American values to local customs and conditions rather than adopt them wholesale? Some sociologists make just that point. They use the term **glocalization** to describe how globalization leads to the simultaneous homogenization of some aspects of life and the strengthening of some local differences (Shaw, 2000).

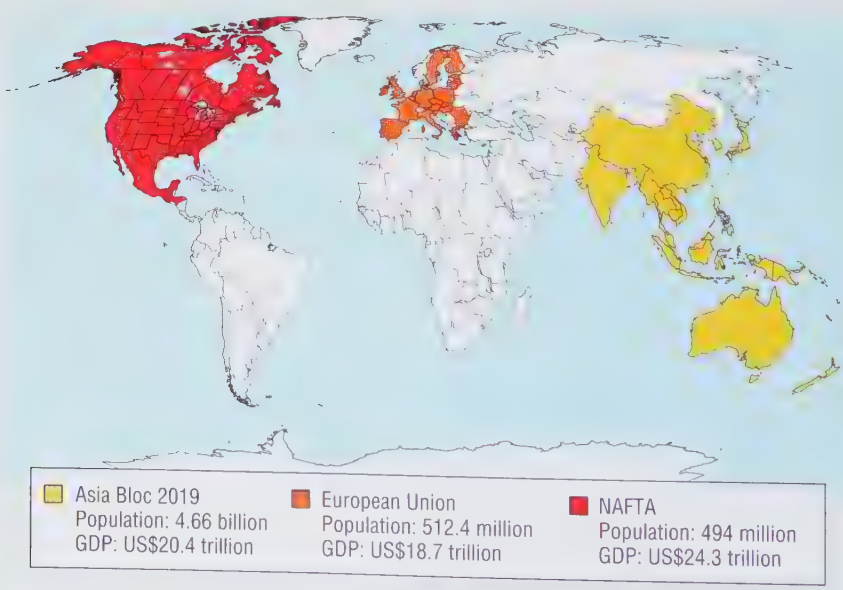
Glocalization is the simultaneous homogenization of some aspects of life and the strengthening of some local differences under the impact of globalization.

Consider how McDonald's modifies its menus to serve different foods in different countries (Watson, 1997). In Québec, McDonald's offers poutine. McDonald's in Taiwan provides betel nuts with its burgers. McDonald's in India offers vegetarian burgers. Israeli McDonald's serves kosher burgers. Dutch McDonald's sells the McKrocket, made of 100 percent beef ragout fried in batter. Hawaiian McDonald's serves Japanese ramen noodles with its burgers. Although the prevalence of the Golden Arches may suggest that the world is becoming more similar, a closer examination of the fare indicates that much is unique.

Regionalization is the division of the world into different and often competing economic, political, and cultural areas.

Regarding globalization as merely homogenization also ignores **regionalization**, the division of the world into different and often competing economic, political, and cultural zones. The division of the world into distinct regions suggests that the institutional and cultural integration of countries is far from complete. For example, Figure 9.1 illustrates that world trade is not dominated by just one country. Rather, three main trading blocs are evident: an Asian bloc dominated by Japan and China, a North American bloc dominated by the United States, and a European bloc dominated by Germany. Although these trade blocs encompass just over a fifth of the world's countries, they account for more than three-quarters of world economic activity as measured by gross domestic product.[1] Most world trade takes place *within* each of these blocs. The blocs compete against one another to obtain a larger share of world trade. Politically, the growth of the European Union (EU) provides an

FIGURE 9.1
The Regionalization of World Trade



Source: International Monetary Fund (2019)

example of regionalization. In the EU, 28 countries coordinate economic, political, military, social, and cultural policies, and 19 of them use the same currency, the euro.

In sum, it is clear that the consequences of globalization are not simple, one-way, and inevitable. In contrast, as you will now learn, the impact of globalization is often messy and has generated much criticism and opposition. The anti-globalization movement is evidence of this fact.

Globalization and Its Discontents

Far from everyone is in favour of globalization. At one extreme are certain Islamic fundamentalist groups, the best known of which are al Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Al Qaeda's vicious attack on New York's World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon in 2001, which killed more than 3000 people, was an attempt to roll back the forces of globalization by striking symbols of what its members and sympathizers consider to be the global reach of godless US capitalism. The murderous march of ISIS across northern Iraq and Syria began in 2014 and killed scores of thousands of men, women, and children. Guided by a harsh and strongly contested interpretation of Islamic law, ISIS's actions were an attempt to create a new country devoid of global and especially Western influence.

The United States and Europe have also witnessed a strong reaction against globalization. Part of the globalization story involves transnational corporations moving factories from wealthy countries to low-wage regions so as to increase profits. As a result, many workers in the world's rich countries have lost secure, well-paying jobs in recent decades and have been forced to take less secure jobs for less pay. At the same time, the labour force in most wealthy countries is aging, and a growing part of the population is retired. This makes it necessary to increase immigration; without replenishing the labour force, rich countries would find it increasingly difficult to support their health, education, welfare, military and other functions. However, some people see increased immigration as a threat to their livelihood and their culture. Populism speaks to such people because it tends to oppose immigration and favour a weakening of global economic ties. Trump in the United States, Le Pen in France, and Orban in Hungary are the new faces of populism in the world.

Figure 9.2 shows the percentage of voters who supported populist parties in Canada, the United States, and 33 European countries in the most recent election held in each country.

FIGURE 9.2

Support for Populist Parties, Canada, United States, and Europe, Most Recent Election (in percent)

Sources: CBC (2019b); CNN (2016); TRIMBO (2019)

About one-third of voters in all 35 countries represented in Figure 9.2 supported populist parties. Populist parties form part or all of the government in 12 of the 35 countries. Note, however, that support for populist parties is exceptionally low in Canada, standing at just 1.6 percent in the 2019 federal election.

A third reaction against globalization is the democratic and socialist anti-globalization movement. It traces its origins back to 1994, when 40 000 union activists, environmentalists, and supporters of workers and peasant movements in less developed countries staged protests against the World Trade Organization, which was meeting in Seattle to encourage and referee global commerce. The 2008–09 financial crisis resulted in widespread layoffs, government cutbacks, and mortgage foreclosures, and increased awareness of the growing gap between the wealthiest members of society and everyone else (see Box 9.2). In 2010–11, the Occupy Movement sought to publicize growing economic inequality by taking to the streets in nearly 100 cities worldwide. Some Occupy Movement protesters were inspired by the rebellion against authoritarian regimes that originated in Tunisia, spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and came to be known as the Arab Spring. Authoritarian regimes in Egypt and elsewhere in the region have been supported for decades by US military and civilian aid, yet little economic progress has taken place outside the oil-producing countries. Democracy remained a pipe dream. The Arab Spring sought to rectify this state of affairs.

The Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 18, Collective Action and Social Movements. Mentioning them here highlights two facts. First, globalization is far from universally welcome. Second, the anti-globalization movement has many currents. Some are extremely violent; others much less so. Some reject only what they regard as the excesses of globalization; others reject globalization in its entirety. This complexity supports our observation that globalization is far from a simple process with predictable consequences. It is a multifaceted phenomenon, the outcome of which is unclear.

BOX 9.2 Sociology and the Media

THE LAUNDROMAT (2019)

Hear the story of Ellen Martin (Meryl Streep), an elderly woman whose husband dies in a tour boat accident. She seeks compensation from the boat owner. However, the boat owner can't collect insurance because his insurer is under investigation for shady dealing.

Ellen is intrepid. She decides to investigate. She learns that the insurer is an offshore shell company that was registered in Panama by Mossack Fonseca, a law firm owned by Jürgen Mossack (Gary Oldman) and Ramón Fonseca (Antonio Banderas). Mossack Fonseca really existed. It was the world's fourth-largest provider of offshore financial services, having established hundreds of thousands of offshore shell companies. It went out of business in 2016 after a whistleblower released extensive documentation about its operations to the world press, including the names of 894 Canadian individuals, corporations, and trusts that owned offshore shell companies registered in Panama. Ellen's story is a fiction, by turns hilarious and infuriating, but it allows the movie to lay bare the operation of a machine that allows the super-rich in the real world to protect and grow their fortunes.

What is an offshore shell company? It is a company that exists only on paper. It has no employees or offices. It is registered in a place that taxes foreign assets that are held locally at a low rate or not at all. It keeps the identity of the company's owner secret. The country's government charges a substantial fee to register the offshore shell company. By holding assets of wealthy foreign individuals, companies, or trusts, offshore shell companies allow these entities to avoid being taxed more heavily in their country of residence. They also allow wealthy individuals, companies or trusts to put illegally obtained money to legitimate use—a process called money laundering. Finally, shell companies, like that of the insurer of the boat in which Ellen Martin's husband died, can be used to operate scams.

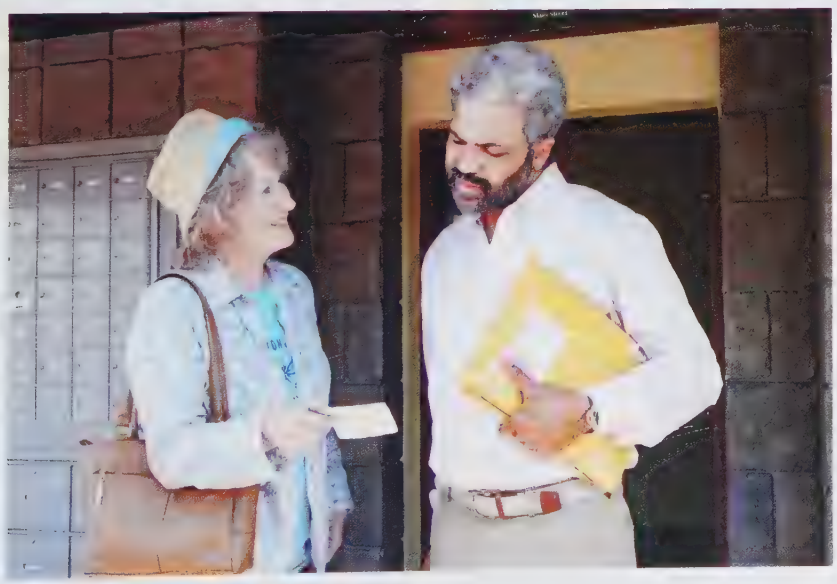
In the real world, governments in the Caribbean region, Ireland, Luxembourg, and elsewhere allow local law firms to establish shell companies for the world's super-rich. They also let the law firms hide the identities of the shell companies' owners. In effect, the law firms are giant laundromats for cleaning dirty money. It is reliably estimated that US$8.7 trillion are buried in offshore shell companies, depriving world governments of US$170 billion in tax revenue every year and thus depriving their citizens of better health, education, welfare, public transportation, and other services (Scharfenberg, 2018). Our government may lose more than US$3 billion (Can$4 billion) each year in unpaid taxes because wealthy Canadian individuals, companies, and trusts own offshore shell companies.

The History of Globalization

The extent of globalization since about 1980 is unprecedented in world history. Sociologist Martin Albrow therefore argues that the "global age" is only four decades old (Albrow, 1997). He dates it from the spread of global awareness and skepticism about the benefits of modernization. However, Albrow and others are inclined to exaggerate the extent of globalization (Gilpin, 2001; Hirst and Thompson, 1999). The nation-state is still a major centre of power in the world. National borders remain important. Most companies concentrate their business in a single country. Most foreign trade occurs between advanced industrial countries and, as we have seen, within distinct regional groups of advanced industrial countries. Many developing countries are poorly integrated in the global economy. Most people in the world have little or no access to the advanced technologies that exemplify globalization, such as email. Cultural differences remain substantial across the planet.

Furthermore, globalization is not as recent as Albrow would have us believe. Anthony Giddens (1990) argues that globalization is the result of industrialization and modernization, which picked up pace in the late nineteenth century. And, in fact, a strong case can be made that the world was highly globalized 100 or more years ago. In the late nineteenth century, people could move across national borders without passports. By one measure, the extent of international trade and capital flow in the late twentieth century only restored the level achieved before World War I (1914–18; Hirst and Thompson, 1999).

World War I and the Great Depression (1929–39) undermined the globalization of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They incited racism, protectionism, and military buildup and led to Nazi and communist dictatorships that culminated in World War II (1939–45; Hobsbawm, 1994; James, 2001). International trade and investment plummeted between 1914 and 1945, and governments erected many new barriers to the free movement



Claudette Barius/© Netflix/courtesy Everett Collection/Canadian Press

Governments could throw a wrench into the operation of the machine. For example, they could tax companies based on where they sell their products rather than where they keep their assets. So, for example, if Apple sells half its cellphones and other devices in the United States, then half its revenue would be taxed in the United States rather than in a low-tax jurisdiction where Apple keeps most of its assets. Governments could also band together to change laws that compel offshore shell companies to reveal the identities of their owners, thus facilitating prosecution for illegal activities. Yet, to date, governments have thrown few wrenches. For example, as of this writing, no legal action has been taken against the 894 Canadian entities identified in the 2016 exposure of the inner workings of Mossack Fonseca.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why have few of Mossack Fonseca's clients been prosecuted?
2. Could you establish an offshore shell company? Why or why not?

of people and ideas. A longer view of globalization suggests that globalization is not an inevitable and linear process. Periods of accelerated globalization can end. Many observers believe that globalization went into reverse when Donald Trump became US president in 2016. He started a trade war with China, initiated a "buy American" program, sought to bring industrial jobs back to the United States, and so on.

An even longer historical view leads to additional insight. Some sociologists, such as Roland Robertson (1992), note that globalization is as old as civilization itself and is in fact the *cause* of modernization rather than the other way around. Archaeological remains show that long-distance trade began 5000 years ago. People have been migrating across continents and even oceans for thousands of years. Alexander the Great conquered vast stretches of Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa, while Christianity and Islam spread far beyond their birthplace in the Middle East. All of these forces contributed to globalization in Robertson's view.

So is globalization 40, 140, or 5000 years old, as suggested by, respectively, Albrow, Giddens, and Robertson? The question has no correct answer. The answer depends on what we want globalization to mean. A short historical view—whether 40 or 140 years—misses the long-term developments that have brought the world's people closer to one another. Yet if we think of globalization as a 5000-year-old phenomenon, the definition and value of the term are diluted.

We prefer to take an intermediate position by thinking of globalization as a roughly 500-year-old phenomenon. We regard the establishment of colonies and the growth of capitalism as the main forces underlying globalization, and both **colonialism** and capitalism began about 500 years ago, symbolized by Columbus's voyage to the Americas. (Colonialism is the direct political control of one country by another.) As you will now see, the main advantage of thinking of globalization in this way is that it tells us much about the causes of development and industrialization and the growing gap between rich and poor countries and people. These topics will now be the focus of our attention.

Colonialism is the direct political control of one country by another.

Time for Review

- What are the main causes of globalization?
- What tendencies suggest that globalization does not always homogenize people?
- When did globalization begin on a wide scale?

Development and Underdevelopment

We begin our sociological discussion of economic development by examining trends in levels of global inequality. We then discuss two theories of development and underdevelopment, both of which seek to uncover the sources of inequality among nations. Next, we explore some examples of successful development. Finally, we use what we learn from these successful examples to propose ways to lessen global inequality.

Peter Treanor/Alamy

A half-hour's drive from the centre of Manila, the capital of the Philippines, an estimated 70 000 Filipinos live on a 22-hectare mountain of rotting garbage, 45 metres high. It is infested with flies, rats, dogs, and disease. On a lucky day, residents can earn up to $5 retrieving scraps of metal and other valuables. On a rainy day, the mountain of garbage is especially treacherous. In July 2000, an avalanche buried 300 people alive. People who live on the mountain of garbage call it "The Promised Land."

Levels and Trends in Global Inequality

In Chapter 8 (Social Stratification), we learned that Canada is a highly stratified society. However, when we shift our focus to the global level, we find evidence of an even more dramatic gap between rich and poor. For example, cat owners in New York City can treat their pets to $100-a-plate birthday parties in a restaurant, while entire families in Cairo (Egypt) and Manila (the Philippines) survive by picking through the refuse in the garbage dumps they call home. Those who travel outside the world's three dozen or so wealthy countries can

TABLE 9.2

Global Priorities: Annual Cost of Selected Goods and Services, 2018–19 (in US$billion)

Good or Service	Cost (in US$ billions)
Additional annual cost, basic education for everyone in the world	11
Additional annual cost, water and sanitation for everyone in the world	15
Additional annual cost, reproductive health care for all women in the world	23
Additional annual cost, basic health and nutrition for everyone in the world	25
Annual dog and cat food sales, United States	30
World global perfume sales	53
World cocaine revenue (2008)	88
Annual beer sales, United States	114
Digital advertising, United States	116
Annual global arms sales	1822

Note: United Nations data for 1998 are adjusted for world population increase, 1998–2019, and the US consumer price index, 1998–2019. Digital advertising, United States, is estimated using data on January–June 2019 sales.

Sources: Brewers Association (2019); IAB (2019); Mordor Intelligence (2019); Pet Food Institute (2019); Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2019); United Nations (1998b); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019); US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019); US Census Bureau (2016)

easily encounter scenes of unforgettable poverty and misery. The gap between rich and poor is especially striking when you consider that if Americans drank 65 percent less beer, they could use the savings to ensure that everyone in the world would have basic education, clean water and sanitation, reproductive health care, and basic health care and nutrition. A mere 4 percent reduction in annual global arms sales would also do the trick (see Table 9.2).

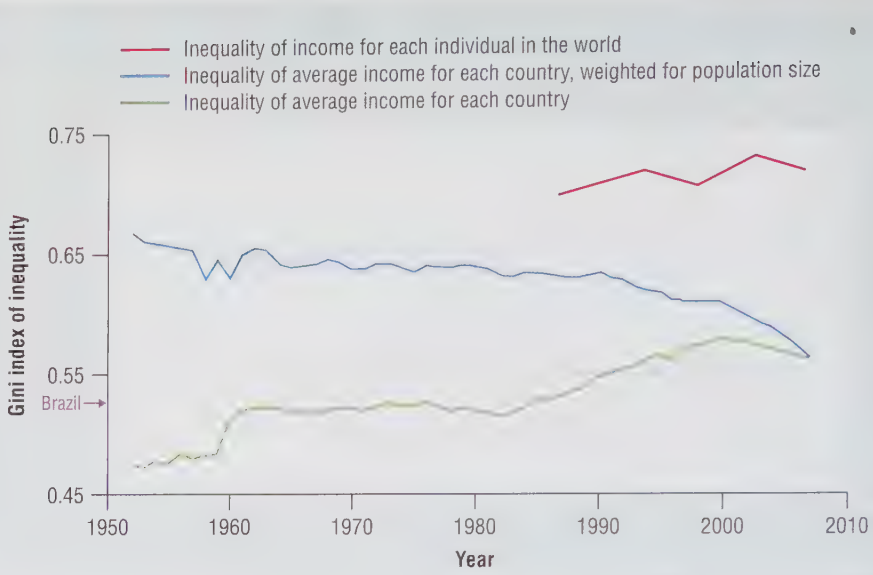
Determining if global inequality has increased or decreased over time depends on how you define it. If you measure inequality as the difference between the average incomes of rich and poor countries, income inequality has increased since 1950 (see the bottom line in Figure 9.3). However, this comparison gives equal weight to each country, whether it is a behemoth like China or a tiny city-state like Monaco.

It makes sense to give more weight to countries with larger populations in our calculations. In this case, income inequality between countries was extremely high in 1950 but subsequently declined, mainly because China began to flourish in the early 1980s and India and Brazil followed suit a little later (see the middle line in Figure 9.3). The level of income inequality among countries weighted for population size fell as a result of the emergence of large new middle classes in these heavily populated countries. Yet economic conditions in other parts of the world continued to deteriorate. In the four decades between 1972 and 2012, per capita income in sub-Saharan Africa fell by nearly 10 percent, taking inflation into account (United Nations, 2010, 2013).

A remaining problem is that comparing country averages fails to take account of the fact that poor people live in rich countries and rich people live in poor countries. Because country averages ignore the magnitude of inequality between the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor, it makes more sense to study income inequality among *individuals* rather than among countries. Doing so, we discover that income inequality was astoundingly steep in 1985 and has risen even higher since then (see the top line in Figure 9.3). Today, the richest 1 percent of the world's population (about 70 million people) earn as much as the bottom 66 percent (about 4.6 billion people) (Milanovic, 2010). About 14 percent of the world's people live on less than US$1 a day, and 37 percent—more than 2 billion people—on less than US$2 a day (see Figure 9.4). Most people living in desperate poverty are women. On the slightly brighter side, the absolute number of people in the world living on less than US$1 a day peaked in 1950 and then started declining.

FIGURE 9.3

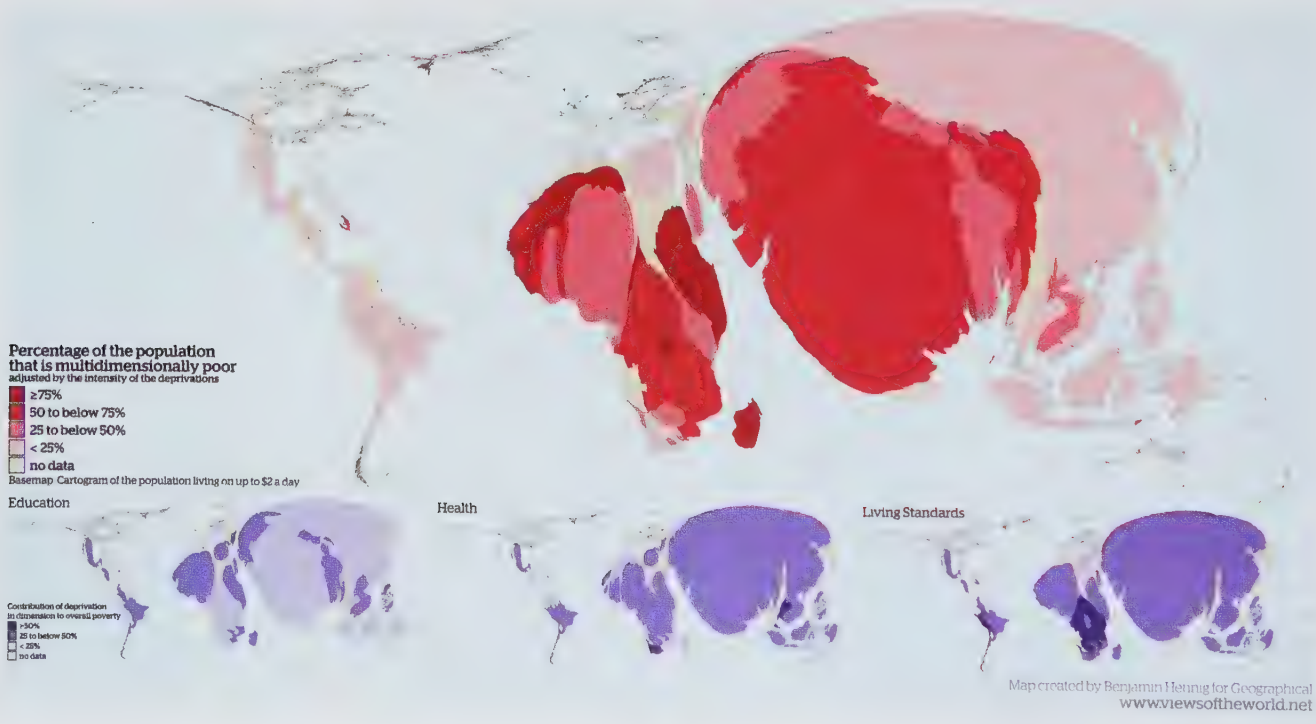
Three Concepts of World Inequality. A Gini index of 0 indicates that every income recipient receives exactly the same amount of income. A Gini index of 1.0 indicates that a single income recipient receives all of the income. To put things in perspective, note that the Gini index of inequality for individuals worldwide is about 0.70, while the Gini index for individuals in Brazil, which has one of the highest levels of inequality of any country, is about 0.52.



Source: Branko Milanovic, "The Consequences of Inequality and Wealth Distribution" (2010). Reproduced by permission. http://ineteconomics.org/people/participants/branko-milanovic

FIGURE 9.4

Multidimensional Poverty



Note: The map colour-codes and adjusts the size of countries for the percentage of people who are desperately poor according to United Nations criteria for education, health and income.

Source: worldmapper.org

We need theories to explain statistics like those just reviewed, so we now outline and critically assess the two main theories that attempt to explain the roots and persistence of global inequality.

Modernization Theory: A Functionalist Approach

Modernization theory holds that economic underdevelopment results from poor countries lacking Western attributes, including Western values, business practices, levels of investment capital, and stable governments.

The first theory that claims to explain global inequality, **modernization theory**, is a variant of functionalism. Modernization theory claims that global inequality is the result of various dysfunctional characteristics of poor societies. In particular, modernization theorists argue that the citizens of poor societies lack several characteristics of Western societies. They lack adequate *capital* to invest in Western-style agriculture and industry, and they lack rational, Western-style *business techniques* of marketing, accounting, sales, and finance. The result? The productivity and profitability of poor societies remain low. In addition, these societies lack stable, Western-style *governments* that could offer a secure framework for investment. Finally, they lack a Western *mentality* that values savings, investment, innovation, education, high achievement, and self-control in having children (Inkeles and Smith, 1976; Rostow, 1960). According to modernization theory, people living in rich countries can best help their poor cousins and eliminate the dysfunctions of their societies by transferring Western culture and capital to them. Only then will the poor countries be able to control population growth, promote democracy, and revitalize agricultural and industrial production. Government-to-government foreign aid can facilitate some of this change, but Western businesses must also be actively encouraged to invest directly in poor countries and to increase trade between rich and poor countries.

Dependency theory views economic underdevelopment as the result of exploitative relations between rich and poor countries.

Dependency Theory: A Conflict Approach

The second theory that claims to explain global inequality is **dependency theory**, a variant of conflict theory. Supporters of this theory claim that, for the past five centuries, the most powerful countries have deliberately worked to impoverish the less powerful ones (Baran, 1957; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Wallerstein, 1974–89). According to dependency theorists, modernization theory blames the victim rather than the perpetrator of the crime; an adequate theory of global inequality should not focus on the internal characteristics of poor countries but should instead follow the principles of conflict theory and focus on patterns of domination and submission. Specifically, in this case, proponents of dependency theory focus on the historical *relationship* between rich and poor countries.

According to dependency theorists, there was much less global inequality in 1500 and even in 1750 than there is today. However, the world's most powerful countries began using their armed forces to subdue and then annex or colonize most of the rest of the world around 1500. Then, the Industrial Revolution began in the late 1700s, allowing the Western European countries, Russia, Japan, and the United States to accumulate enormous wealth and power. They used these resources to extend their global reach, forcing their colonies or annexed territories to become sources of raw materials, cheap labour, investment opportunities, and markets for the conquering nations. As a result, the colonizers prevented industrialization of the colonies and locked them into poverty.

Although nearly all colonies became politically independent after World War II, dependency theorists say that substantial foreign investment, support for authoritarian governments, and mounting debt soon replaced exploitation by direct political control but had much the same effect. Let us consider each of these mechanisms in turn.

- *Substantial foreign investment.* Many people assume that investment is always a good thing. According to dependency theorists, however, investment by multinational corporations often has positive consequences for rich countries and negative

In 1893, leaders of the British mission pose before taking over what became Rhodesia and is now Zimbabwe. To raise a volunteer army, every British trooper was offered about 23 square kilometres of native land and 20 gold claims. The Matabele and Mashona peoples were subdued in a three-month war. Nine hundred farms and 10 000 gold claims were granted to the troopers and about 100 000 cattle were stolen, leaving the native survivors without a livelihood. Forced labour was subsequently introduced by the British so that the natives could pay an annual £2 tax.

Weidenfeld and Nicolson Archives

consequences for poor countries. According to these theorists, investment in poor countries is typically used only to extract raw materials, create low-wage manufacturing jobs, and siphon off wealth in the form of profits. The raw materials are used to create high-wage jobs in design, research, manufacturing, and administration back in the rich countries, where multinational corporations situate their head offices. Some of the manufactured goods are then sold back to the poor, unindustrialized countries for additional profit. Dependency theorists conclude that, for poor countries, the disadvantages of foreign investment outweigh the advantages.

- *Support for authoritarian governments.* Dependency theorists also argue that multinational corporations and rich countries have supported local authoritarian governments in the post-colonial period to continue their exploitation of poor countries. When these governments were unable to keep their populations subdued, Western governments sent in troops and military advisers, conducting what became known as "gunboat diplomacy." A classic case is Guatemala in the early 1950s, when the country's democratic government began to redistribute land to impoverished peasants (LaFeber, 1993). The United Fruit Company, an US multinational corporation and the biggest landowner in Guatemala, owned much of this land. In 1954, the CIA backed a right-wing coup in Guatemala that succeeded in preventing land reform. Consequently, the United Fruit Company continued its highly profitable business as usual.
- *Mounting debt.* After attaining independence, the governments of the poor countries wanted to borrow money from Western banks and governments to build airports, roads, harbours, and rudimentary education systems, and to deliver safe water and the most basic health care to their people. (Some rulers squandered a considerable portion of this money on personal luxuries.) Under these circumstances, the countries' level of debt grew every year, along with the interest payments that inevitably accompany debt. Interest payments now amount to more than $1.6 billion a day. Government foreign aid helps, but not much. It amounts to less than 10 percent of interest payments (Jubilee Debt Campaign, 2010: 6; OECD, 2008: 6).

Core, Peripheral, Semiperipheral, and State Capitalist Countries

Core capitalist countries are rich countries that are the world's major sources of capital and technology (the United States, Japan, and Germany).

The **peripheral capitalist countries** are former colonies that are poor and are major sources of raw materials and cheap labour.

The **semiperipheral capitalist countries** consist of former colonies that are making considerable headway in their attempts to industrialize (South Korea, Taiwan, and Israel are examples).

In a **state capitalist country**, businesses compete internally and on the world market but are under the ultimate control of the country's ruling party.

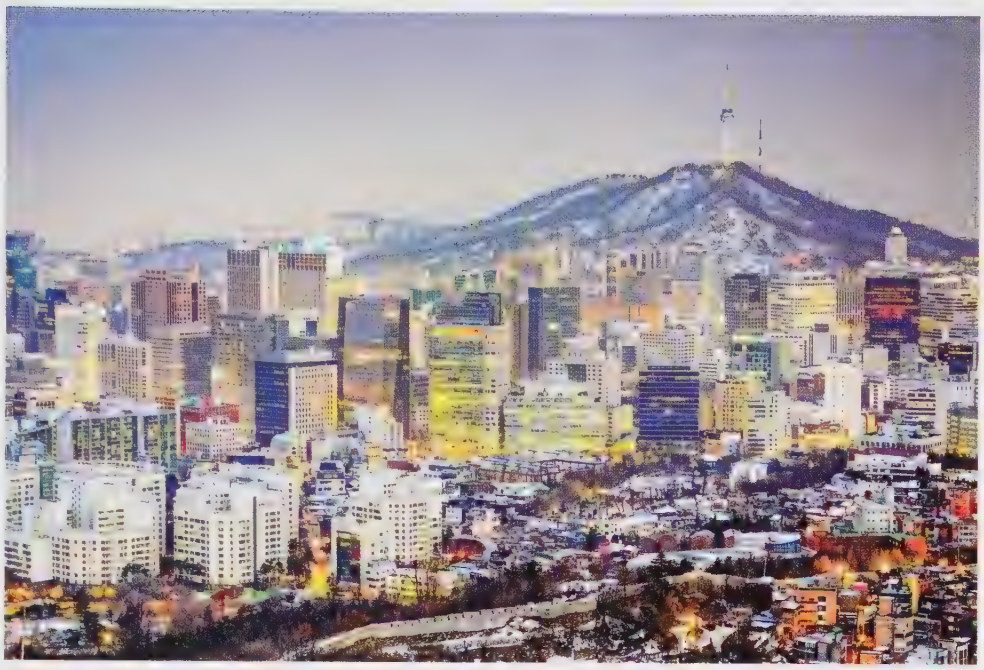
Although dependency theory provides a more realistic account of the sources of global inequality than modernization theory does, it leaves a big question unanswered: How have some countries managed to escape poverty and start rapid economic development? After all, the world does not consist just of **core capitalist countries** that are major sources of capital and technology (the United States, Japan, and Germany) and **peripheral capitalist countries** that are major sources of raw materials and cheap labour (the former colonies). In addition, a middle tier of **semiperipheral capitalist countries** consists of former colonies that are making considerable headway in their attempts to become prosperous (South Korea, Taiwan, and Israel, for example; Wallerstein, 1974–89). Nor can one ignore the rapidly growing Chinese behemoth, which some analysts call a **state capitalist country** because its companies compete on the internal and world markets but are under the ultimate control of that country's dominant communist party. Comparing the poor peripheral countries with the more successful semiperipheral and state capitalist countries presents us with a useful natural experiment. The comparison suggests the circumstances that help some poor countries overcome the worst effects of colonialism.

The semiperipheral and state capitalist countries differ from the peripheral countries in four main ways, which we outline below, focusing mainly on South Korea and Taiwan (Kennedy, 1993: 193–227; Lie, 1998).

TYPE OF COLONIALISM

Taiwan and Korea became colonies of Japan around the turn of the twentieth century and remained so until 1945. However, unlike the European colonizers of Africa, Latin America, and other parts of Asia, the Japanese built up the economies of their colonies by establishing transportation networks and communication systems and by building steel, chemical, and

hydroelectric power plants. Under these circumstances, Taiwan and South Korea were at an advantage after Japanese colonialism ended, compared with other colonies such as Ghana after British colonialism ended. As a result, South Korea and Taiwan were able to use the Japanese-built infrastructure and Japanese-trained personnel as catalysts for further development.



ESB Professional/Shutterstock

Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is one of the semiperipheral countries making rapid strides toward prosperity.

GEOPOLITICAL POSITION

The United States was the world's leading economic and military power at the end of World War II. However, the Soviet Union and China began to threaten its supremacy in the late 1940s. In a bid to prevent South Korea and Taiwan from falling to the communists in the 1960s, the United States poured an extraordinary amount of aid into both countries, along with extending large, low-interest loans and opening its domestic market to Taiwanese and South Korean products. As a crucially important ally of the United States in the Middle East, Israel also received substantial economic assistance. Countries that were less strategically important to the United States received less help in their drive to industrialize.

STATE POLICY

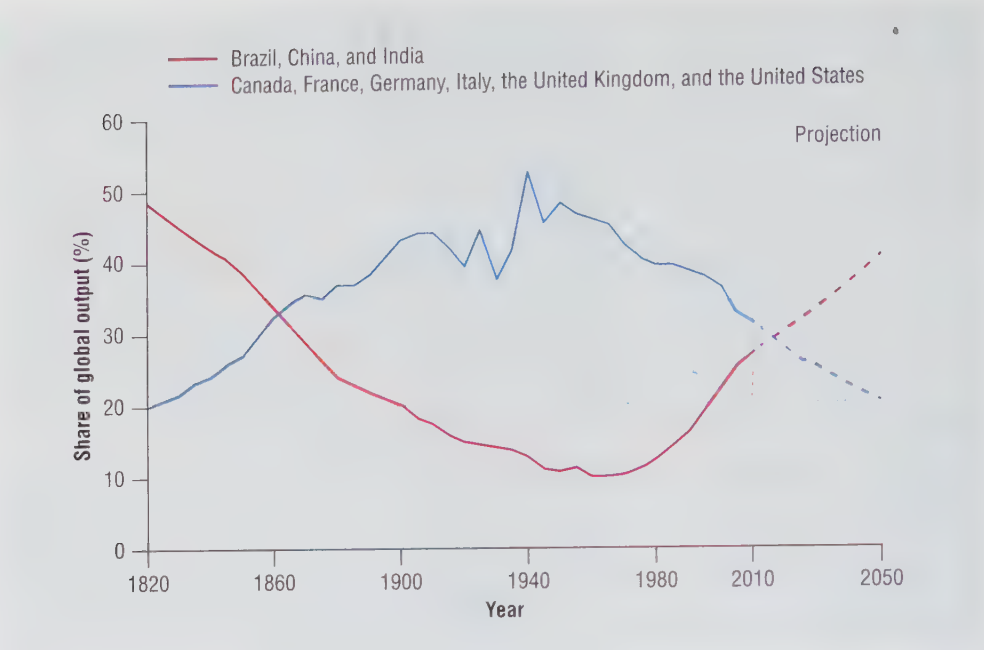
State policies are a third factor that explains the relative success of some countries in their efforts to industrialize and flourish economically. The Taiwanese and South Korean states were developed on the Japanese economic model. That is, they kept workers' wages low, restricted trade union growth, and maintained quasi-military discipline in factories. Furthermore, they encouraged citizens to put much of their money in the bank by setting high taxation rates on consumer goods, setting tariffs or taxes on foreign imports, and preventing citizens from investing abroad. These policies created a large pool of capital that the banks lent out for industrial expansion. Beginning in the 1960s, the South Korean and Taiwanese governments also stimulated industrial growth by giving subsidies and training grants to export-based industries and taxing foreign-made products. Finally, the Taiwanese and South Korean states laid solid foundations for economic growth by investing heavily in a healthy and well-educated labour force and good transportation and communication systems. The government of China acted similarly to spur economic growth in that country.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Taiwan and South Korea are socially cohesive countries. Consequently, they can easily generate popular support around development policies. Their cohesive social structures also encourage citizens to work hard, save a lot of money, and focus on scientific education.

Social solidarity in Taiwan and South Korea is partly a result of comprehensive land reform, which was carried out in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and which redistributed land to small farmers. Land reform largely eliminated the class of large landowners—a class that usually opposes industrialization—and thus rid the countries of a major potential source of disruptive class conflict. In contrast, land reform did not take place in many countries in Latin America and Africa. Instead, the United States often used military intervention in Latin America to prevent land reform because US commercial interests profited substantially from the existence of large plantations; recall the Guatemalan case, discussed earlier.

FIGURE 9.5
Share of World Gross Domestic Product by Selected Countries, 1820–2050 (projected, percentage)



Source: United Nations Development Programme (2013: 13)

Another factor that contributed to social solidarity in Taiwan and South Korea is that neither country suffered from serious internal conflicts. British, French, and other Western European colonizers often drew the borders of African countries to keep hostile tribes under the same jurisdiction. Inciting tribal conflict and playing one tribe off against another made it easier for the colonizers to rule. This policy led to much social and political upheaval in postcolonial Africa. Today, the continent suffers from frequent civil wars, coups, and uprisings. The high level of internal conflict acts as an impediment to economic development.

From this list of factors that helped some postcolonial countries industrialize and prosper, we can expect that the poor countries in the best position to join the ranks of the rich in the coming decades are those that benefit from a solid industrial infrastructure, strategic geopolitical importance, strong states with strong development policies, and socially cohesive populations. Countries that have *some* of these characteristics may experience some economic growth and increase in the well-being of their populations in the near future (see Figure 9.5). In contrast, African countries south of the Sahara have inherited the most damaging consequences of colonialism and they enjoy fewer of the conditions that could help them escape the history that has been imposed on them. China is currently investing heavily in sub-Saharan Africa to extend and strengthen its influence in the world. The jury is still out on whether the benefits will exceed the disadvantages for that troubled region.

CANADA AS A SEMIPERIPHERAL COUNTRY

Many analysts regard Canada as a semiperipheral country that has managed to achieve prosperity despite its colonial past (Brym with Fox, 1989: 34–56; Laxer, 1989):

- The *type of colonialism* that Canada experienced is sometimes called "White settler colonialism." Like Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, Canada was settled by large numbers of Europeans who soon overwhelmed the Indigenous population. They were determined to reproduce or improve the standard of living they enjoyed in the old country. Much of the wealth they produced was therefore reinvested locally. In contrast, when the European powers colonized Africa, they set up only small enclaves of White settlers. Their main aim was to exploit local resources and populations, sending nearly all of the wealth back to Europe.

- Canada's *geopolitical position* has always been highly favourable to economic development because it has served as a major supplier of raw materials and other goods to France, Great Britain, and the United States, and has fallen under the protective wing of each of these countries, all of which have viewed Canada as a staunch ally. For example, Canada played a disproportionately large role in World War II as a training ground, source of raw materials, and supplier of arms and soldiers to the Allies.
- Canada's *state policy* has sometimes acted to protect and stimulate the growth of Canadian industry, although not as consistently as the state policy of, say, South Korea. For example, Canada's 1879 National Policy established a duty on imported manufactured goods. It sheltered the growth of Canadian industry, then in its infancy, by making foreign-made manufactured goods more expensive. Similarly, the 1965 Auto Pact required that foreign automobile companies wanting to sell cars in Canada duty-free manufacture cars in Canada and use a certain proportion of Canadian-made components. The Auto Pact thus stimulated the growth of an industry that, directly or indirectly, was responsible for the employment of one-sixth of Ontario's labour force.
- Canada's *social structure* has arguably had fewer positive effects on economic development than is the case in such countries as South Korea and Taiwan. In Canada, the French–English conflict has drawn attention away from development policy. And although strong farmers' and workers' movements have pushed governments in other countries to attend closely to development issues, these movements have been relatively weak in Canada (Brym, 1992; Laxer, 1989).

Time for Review

- What are the main trends in patterns of global inequality in recent decades?
- What are the main principles of modernization theory?
- What are the main principles of dependency theory?
- Why have some previously poor countries developed rapidly in recent decades?

Neoliberal versus Democratic Globalization

Globalization and Neoliberalism

For some political and economic leaders, **neoliberal globalization** marks the road to prosperity. Policies based on the idea of neoliberal globalization promote private control of industry and minimal government interference in the running of the economy. They also support foreign investment and the removal of taxes and restrictive regulations that discourage the international buying and selling of goods and services. Advocates of neoliberal globalization are similar to the modernization theorists of a generation ago in that they believe that poor countries would prosper if only they would emulate the policies of rich countries.

Neoliberal globalization is a policy that promotes private control of industry; minimal government interference in the running of the economy; the removal of taxes, tariffs, and restrictive regulations that discourage the international buying and selling of goods and services; and the encouragement of foreign investment.

Many social scientists, including Joseph E. Stiglitz (2002), the Nobel Prize–winning economist and former chief economist of the World Bank, are skeptical of this prescription. Stiglitz argues that the World Bank and other international economic organizations often impose neoliberal policies on developing countries that put them at a disadvantage compared with developed countries. For example, in the mid-1990s, the foreign debt of Mozambique was 4.5 times the country's gross national product. In other words, the amount of money Mozambique owed to foreigners was four-and-a-half times more than the value of goods and services produced by all the people of Mozambique in a year. In an effort to avoid an economic crisis, Mozambique turned to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for relief. The IMF responded by stating that Mozambique's government-imposed minimum wage of less than $1 a day was "excessive," and recommended that Mozambique service its foreign debt by spending twice as much as its education budget and four times

as much as its health budget on interest payments (Mittelman, 2000: 104). How might such crippling policies help the people of Mozambique? The answer is unclear.

Historical evidence suggests that, with one exception, neoliberalism was *never* a successful development strategy in the early stages of industrialization. Germany, the United States, Japan, and Sweden became highly economically developed between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore became highly developed economically in the second half of the twentieth century. Today, China and India are quickly industrializing. None of these countries pursued neoliberal economic policies. To varying degrees and in somewhat different ways, their governments all interceded to encourage industrialization. They protected new industries behind tariff walls, invested public money to subsidize national industries, and so on. In fact, China and India currently maintain among the highest barriers to international trade in the world (Chang, 2002; Gerschenkron, 1962; Laxer, 1989). Usually only after industrial development is well under way and national industries are able to compete on the global market do countries begin to support and promote varying amounts of neoliberal globalization. As one political economist wrote, "The sensible ones liberalise in line with the growth of domestic capacities—they try to expose domestic producers to enough competition to make them more efficient, but not enough to kill them" (Wade in Wade and Wolf, 2002: 19).

And the one exception? Great Britain. However, it is an exception that proves the rule. Great Britain was the first industrializer. It had no international competitors, and therefore its industry needed little government protection to grow.

In sum, one would be wise to remain skeptical about the benefits of neoliberal globalization for poor countries. Yet, as we will now see, globalization can be improved so that its economic and technological benefits are distributed more evenly throughout the world.

Foreign Aid, Debt Cancellation, and Tariff Reduction

Many people contribute to charities that help developing countries in a variety of ways. Many more contribute development aid indirectly through the taxes they pay. The UN urges the world's richest countries to contribute 0.7 percent of their national income to development aid. (This goal was set in 1969 at the urging of Canadian prime minister Lester B. Pearson.) In 2017, only 44 countries contributed overseas development aid and just six of them reached the 0.7 percent goal: the United Arab Emirates, Sweden, Luxembourg, Norway, Turkey, and Denmark (see Figure 9.6). Canada ranked 19th with its contribution of 0.28 percent of national income. The United States ranked 26th at 0.18 percent. A World Bank official compared the subsidies that rich countries give to farms and businesses within their borders to the amount of development aid they gave developing countries. He concluded that "the average cow [in a rich country] is supported by three times the level of income of a poor person in Africa" (quoted in Schuettler, 2002).

Since the United States is by far the world's richest country, it is the American contribution to foreign aid that potentially makes the greatest difference. But even if the United States quadrupled its foreign aid to meet UN guidelines, some foreign aid as presently delivered is not effective. High administrative and overhead costs often accompany foreign aid. In addition, recipient countries are often required to use foreign aid to buy goods from donor countries that may not be high-priority items for the recipients. Food aid often has detrimental effects on poor countries because it increases dependence on non-indigenous foods and stunts local agricultural development. Some foreign aid organizations, such as Oxfam and Caritas Internationalis, spend little money on administration and overhead expenses. These organizations are driven by high principles. They pay low salaries to staff members, build partnerships with trustworthy local organizations, and work with their partners to identify the most urgent needs of poor countries, focusing their efforts on meeting those needs (Ron, 2007). The impact of these organizations indicates that foreign aid can be beneficial. However, strict oversight is vital to make certain that foreign aid is directed to truly helpful projects, such as improving irrigation and sanitation systems and helping people obtain and use better farming techniques. Increasing the amount of foreign

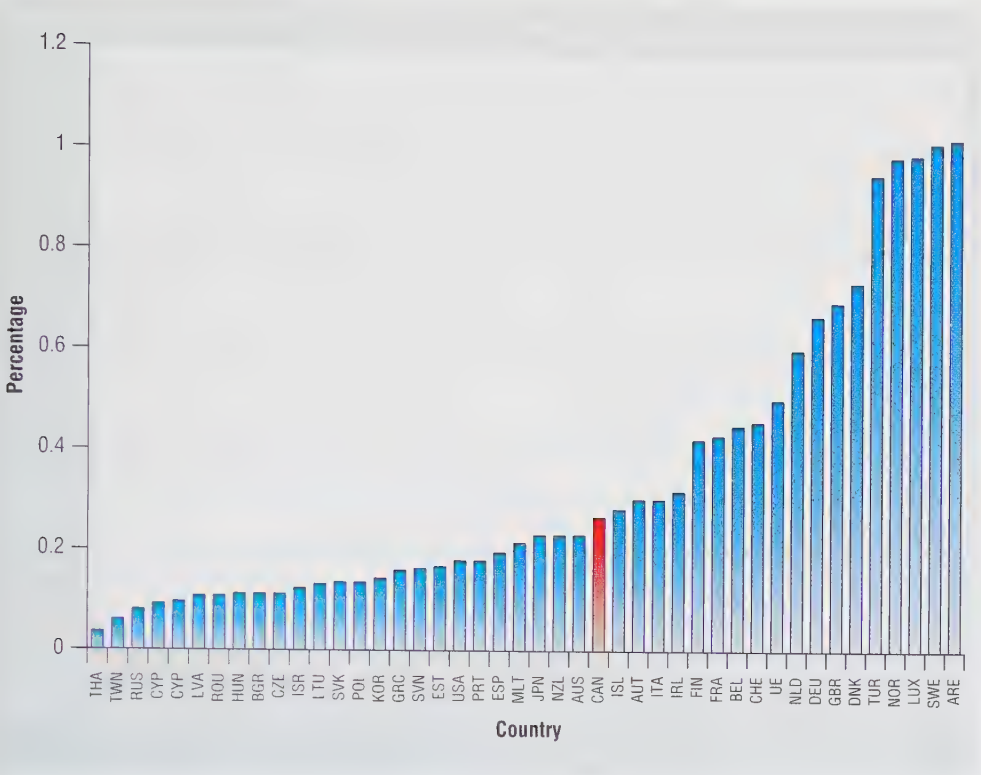


FIGURE 9.6

Official Development Assistance as Percentage of Gross National Income, 44 Countries, 2017

Source: OECD (2018a)

aid and restructuring how it is delivered can therefore help alleviate some of the extremes of neoliberal globalization.

So can debt cancellation. Many analysts suggest that the world's rich countries and banks should simply write off the debt the developing countries owe them in recognition of historical injustices. They argue that the burden imposed by debt precludes developing countries from building economic infrastructure, improving the health and education of their citizens, and developing economic policies that can help them escape poverty. In recent years, this suggestion for moderating the worst effects of neoliberal globalization has gained support from some leading politicians in the developed countries.

A third reform proposed in recent years involves rich countries eliminating or at least lowering agricultural tariffs and subsidies. Such tariffs and subsidies prevent developing countries from exporting goods that could earn them money for investment in agriculture, industry, and infrastructure. Eliminating or lowering tariffs and subsidies would require training some farmers in rich countries for new kinds of work, but it would also stimulate economic growth in the developing world.

Democratic Globalization

The final reform we examine involves attempts to help spread democracy throughout the developing world. A considerable body of research demonstrates that democracy lowers inequality and supports economic growth (Pettersson, 2003; Sylwester, 2002; United Nations, 2002). Why? First, democracies make it more difficult for elite groups to misuse their power and augment their wealth and income at the expense of the poor. Second, democracies provide a better investment climate because they increase political stability. Finally, because they encourage broad political participation, democracies tend to enact policies that are more responsive to people's needs and benefit a wide range of people from all social classes.

Although democracy has spread in recent decades, just 39 percent of the world's population lived in fully democratic countries in 2017 (Freedom House, 2018; Chapter 13, Political Economy). In fact, the United States has supported as many anti-democratic as democratic regimes in the developing world by providing them with military and financial assistance. Between the end of World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, such support often had the stated goal of halting the spread of Soviet influence. However, the assistance often resulted in unexpected and unwelcome consequences (Johnson, 2000). For example, the US government supported Saddam Hussein in the 1980s when it considered Iran, Iraq's enemy, the bigger threat to US security interests. In addition, the United States financed Osama bin Laden when he was fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Only a decade later, these so-called allies turned into the United States' worst enemies (Chomsky, 1991; Johnson, 2000; Kolko, 2002).

In conclusion, we have reviewed four reforms to neoliberal globalization that could change its nature and turn it into what we would like to call democratic globalization. These reforms include offering stronger support for democracy in the developing world, providing more and better foreign aid, forgiving the debt owed by developing countries to the rich countries, and eradicating many of the agricultural tariffs and subsidies that restrict exports from developing countries. These types of policies could potentially help the developing world overcome the legacy of colonialism and join the ranks of the well-to-do. They would do much to ensure that the complex process we call globalization would benefit humanity as a whole. But whether such policies will be enacted remains far from certain.

Time for Review

- What is neoliberal globalization?
- How could the level of global inequality be lowered?

Summary

1. **What is globalization and why is it taking place?**
   Globalization is the growing interdependence and mutual awareness of individuals and economic, political, and social institutions around the world. It is a response to many forces, some technological (e.g., the development of inexpensive means of rapid international communication), others economic (e.g., burgeoning international trade and investment), and still others political (e.g., the creation of transnational organizations that limit the sovereign powers of nation states).

2. **In what sense does globalization create a world that is both more homogeneous and more localized?**
   Globalization homogenizes us insofar as it creates a common world culture of movies, commodities, political ideals, economic policies, and so on. However, these cultural elements are adapted to local conditions, creating unique hybrids. Moreover, globalization has evoked an anti-globalization reaction in many places.

3. **What are the main trends in global inequality and poverty?**
   Global inequality and poverty are staggering and in some respects are worsening. The income gap between rich and poor countries weighted for population size has declined since 1950, but the gap between rich and poor individuals has grown worldwide.

4. **What are the main sociological theories of economic development?**
   Modernization theory argues that global inequality occurs as a result of some countries lacking sufficient capital, Western values, rational business practices, and stable

governments. Dependency theory counters with the claim that global inequality results from the exploitative relationship between rich and poor countries.

5. **What are the differences between countries that have recently emerged from poverty and those that have not?**
   The poor countries best able to emerge from poverty have a colonial past that left them with industrial infrastructures. They also enjoy a favourable geopolitical position. They implement strong, growth-oriented economic policies. And they have socially cohesive populations. Countries that have not emerged from poverty tend to lack these characteristics.

6. **How can the disadvantages of globalization be minimized?**
   Neoliberal globalization can be reformed so that the benefits of globalization are more evenly distributed throughout the world. Possible reforms include offering stronger support for democracy in the developing world, contributing more and better foreign aid, forgiving the debt owed by developing countries to the rich countries, and eliminating tariffs that restrict exports from developing countries.

Note

1. Gross national product (GNP) is the total dollar value of goods and services produced in a country in a year. It allocates goods and services based on the nationality of the owners. Gross domestic product (GDP) is a similar measure, but it instead allocates goods and services based on the location of the owners. Goods and services produced overseas by foreign subsidiaries would be included in GNP but not in GDP.

10 Race and Ethnicity

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Distinguish race from ethnicity, identify how both are socially constructed, and analyze how social structure supports them.
- Identify ways in which social relations influence ethnic and racial identity for members of minority and majority groups.
- Evaluate the role of power and privilege in preserving ethnic and racial inequality.
- Predict the likely future place of race and ethnicity in Canada.

Defining Race and Ethnicity

The Great Brain Robbery

About 150 years ago, Dr. Samuel George Morton of Philadelphia was the most distinguished scientist in North America. Among other things, Morton collected and measured human skulls. The skulls came from various times and places, and originally belonged to people of different races. Morton believed he could show that the bigger your brain, the smarter you were. To prove his point he packed BB-sized shot into a skull until it was full. Next he poured the shot from the skull into a graduated cylinder. He then recorded the volume of shot in the cylinder. Finally, he noted the race of the person from whom each skull came. This procedure, he thought, would allow him to draw conclusions about the average brain size of different races.

As he expected, Morton found that the races ranking highest in the social hierarchy had the biggest brains, while those ranking lowest had the smallest brains. He claimed that the people with the biggest brains were people of White European heritage. Next were people from Asian backgrounds. Then came Indigenous North Americans. The people at the bottom of the social hierarchy—and those with the smallest brains—were Black.

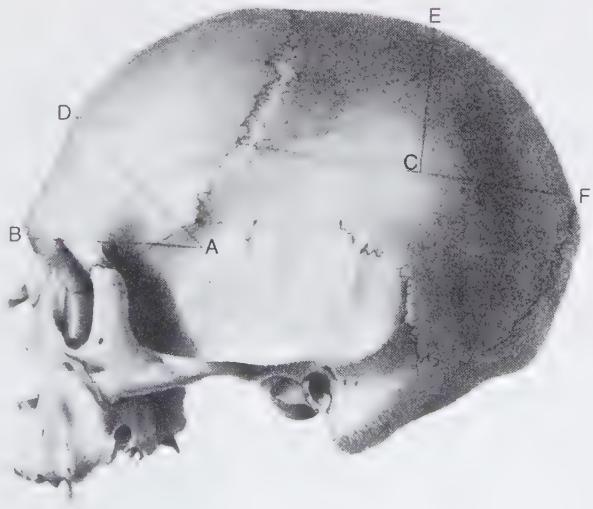
Morton's research had profound sociological implications, for he claimed to show that the system of social inequality in North America and throughout the world had natural, biological roots. If, on average, members of some racial groups are rich and others poor, some highly educated and others illiterate, some powerful and others powerless, that was, said Morton, due to differences in brain size and mental capacity. Moreover, because he used science to show that Native North Americans and Black people *naturally* rested at the bottom of the social hierarchy, his ideas were used to justify two of the most oppressive forms of domination and injustice: colonization and slavery.

Despite claims of scientific objectivity, not a shred of evidence supported Morton's ideas. For example, in one of his three main studies, Morton measured the capacity of skulls robbed from Egyptian tombs. He found that the average volume of "Negroid" skulls was 65.5 cubic millilitres smaller than the average volume of "Caucasian" skulls. This fact seemed to prove his case. Today, however, we know that three main issues compromise his findings:

1. Morton claimed to be able to distinguish the skulls of White and Black people by the shapes of the skulls. Since it was not possible to do so accurately, Morton's sorting of skulls is questionable.
2. Morton's skulls formed a small, unrepresentative sample of just 72 skulls.
3. Morton's racial samples were incomparable with respect to gender. Females composed 71 percent of the Negroid group and only 48 percent of the Caucasian group. Given that women's bodies are, on average, smaller than men's, these group comparisons are unfair. Morton's findings were biased in favour of larger White skulls.

Scientifically speaking, Morton's findings are meaningless. Yet they were influential for a long time, and some people still believe them. For example, in 1963, the author of an article about race in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, then the world's most authoritative general reference source, wrote that Black individuals have "a rather small brain in relation to their size" (Buxton, 1963: 864A). That

In the nineteenth century, brain size was falsely held to be one of the main indicators of intellectual capacity. Average brain size was incorrectly said to vary by race. Researchers who were eager to prove the existence of such correlations are now widely regarded as practitioners of a racist quasi-science.



Samuel Morton, Crania Americana (1839)

Bain News Service, Publisher. Ota Bengi [sic], ca. 1915. [Between 1915 and 1916] Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/resource/ggbain.22741/

Ota Benga in the Bronx Zoo's primate exhibit, 1906

claim was repeated in a controversial book written by a Canadian psychologist in the mid-1990s (Rushton, 1995). Yet there is no more evidence today than there was in 1850 that any racial group has a larger or smaller brain than any other group.

Race, Biology, and Society

Biological arguments about racial differences have grown more sophisticated over time. However, the scientific basis of these arguments is just as shaky now as it always has been.

In medieval Europe, some aristocrats concluded that they were racially different from peasants because they could see blue veins under their pale skin but could not see blue veins under the peasants' suntanned skin. These aristocrats referred to themselves as "blue bloods." They disregarded the fact that the blood from an aristocrat's wound was just as red as the blood from a peasant's wound.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, you would find something unfathomable in North America today: the human zoo. In 1904, Indigenous peoples from all over the world were brought to the United States to be put on display at the St. Louis World's Fair. One individual who drew the particular attention of crowds was a young man named Ota Benga. Scientists had spent decades looking for Charles Darwin's supposed "missing link" between humans and apes. Benga, who was a member of a Congolese pygmy tribe, was regarded by some of them as living evidence (Newkirk, 2015). Eventually, Benga was placed on display at the Bronx Zoo's monkey house. Human exhibits were common in Europe as well, including one in which eight Labrador Inuit died of smallpox in the 1880s (Rivet, 2014).

Scientific racism continued throughout the twentieth century. Nearly a century ago, some scholars expressed the belief that racial differences in average IQ scores were biologically based. Thus, in 1927, Canadian professor Peter Sandiford argued that Canada must institute selective immigration to ensure that only the best and the brightest arrived on our shores and that we keep out "misfits" and "defectives." He encouraged the recruitment of people of British, German, and Danish stock, and discouraged the recruitment of Poles, Italians, and Greeks. Sandiford provided IQ test results supporting his selective immigration policy. He argued that his data showed the mental superiority of Northern Europeans compared with Eastern and Southern Europeans. However, his testing results also provided what he regarded as "profoundly disturbing" evidence. People of Japanese and Chinese ancestry had the highest intelligence scores—results he had not predicted. He dismissed this finding by asserting that a few clever Asians had apparently entered Canada. They were exceptions, he wrote, and should not detract from the "need" to also keep Asians out of Canada (McLaren, 1990).

Similarly, Jews scored below non-Jews on IQ tests in the United States in the 1920s, leading some to argue against Jewish immigration. More recently, some people argue that because Black people score on average below White people, it is justifiable to slash budgets for schools where many Black people live. These people state that it is not worthwhile to invest good money in their schooling if low IQ scores are rooted in biology and are therefore fixed (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994).

However, arguments against both Jewish immigration and better education for inner-city Black people overlook the reality that Jewish IQ scores rose as Jews moved up the class hierarchy and could afford better education, and that enriched educational facilities have routinely boosted the IQ scores of Black children (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, 1999; Heckman, 2011; Nisbett, 2011). Much research indicates that the social setting in which a person is raised and educated influences IQ. In other words, claiming that racial differences in IQ scores are due to biological differences is about as accurate as stating that aristocrats have blue blood (Cancio, Evans, and Maume, 1996; Fischer et al., 1996; Chapter 16, Education).

If evidence indicates that racial differences in average IQ scores are not grounded in biology, what about other differences? For example, does evidence support the belief we sometimes hear that, because of biological differences, Black people are better than White people at singing and sports but are also more prone to crime?

Although the evidence might initially seem strong that Black people are better at sports, deeper analysis indicates that this is simply untrue. Yes, 77 percent of NBA players and 69 percent of NFL players are Black. Black individuals of West African descent hold the 200 fastest 100-metre dash times, all under 10 seconds. North and East Africans commonly win 40 percent of the top international distance-running races even though they represent only a fraction of 1 percent of the world's population (Bloom, 2015; Lapchick, 2015). However, we must consider two points when contemplating supposed evidence for the genetic basis of Black athletic superiority. First, scientists have failed to identify a gene linked to general athletic superiority. Second, Black athletes do not perform unusually well in many sports, such as swimming, hockey, cycling, tennis, gymnastics, and sailing.

In contrast, sociologists have established particular *social* conditions that lead to high rates of participation in sports, as well as in entertainment and crime. These social conditions affect all groups of people who face widespread prejudice and discrimination, regardless of race. In particular, disproportionately large numbers of people in these groups tend to participate in sports, entertainment, and crime because they enjoy relatively few ways to improve their social and economic position. **Prejudice** and **discrimination** often block their opportunities for upward mobility.

Prejudice is an attitude that judges a person on his or her group's real or imagined characteristics.

Discrimination is unfair treatment of people because of their group membership.

For example, North American Jews played a prominent role in some professional sports until the 1950s, when prejudice and discrimination against Jews began to significantly decline. Thus, when the New York Knicks beat the Toronto Huskies in the very first NBA game on November 1, 1946, New York's starting lineup consisted of Ossie Schechtman, Stan Stutz, Jake Weber, Ralph Kaplowitz, and Leo "Ace" Gottlieb—an all-Jewish squad (National Basketball Association, 2000). Similarly, Koreans in Japan today are subject to much prejudice and discrimination, and they often choose to pursue careers in sports and entertainment. In contrast, Koreans in Canada face less prejudice and discrimination, and few of them become athletes and entertainers. Instead, they are often said to excel in engineering and science. As these examples suggest, social circumstances have a big impact on athletic and other forms of behaviour.

The companion of the idea that Black people are genetically superior to White people in athletic ability is that they are genetically inferior in terms of intellectual ability. Both ideas reinforce Black-White inequality. Think of it this way. The P.K. Subbans and Andrew Wiggins of the world receive disproportionate attention as role models for Black youth, but there are only a few thousand professional athletes in North America. In contrast, there are millions of pharmacists, graphic designers, lawyers, systems analysts, police officers, doctors, and people in other interesting and well-paying occupations that offer steady employment and good pay. It follows that the idea of "natural" Black athletic superiority and intellectual inferiority encourages Black athletes to bet on a high-risk proposition—that they will succeed in professional sports. At the same time, this idea diverts attention from a much safer bet—that they can attain upward mobility through academic excellence (Sage and Eitzen, 2014).

Courtesy Dr. Chika Stacy Oriuwa

Athletic heroes such as Andrew Wiggins are more frequently held up as role models for Black youth than are professional heroes such as Dr. Chika Stacy Oriuwa, who in 2020 was the first Black woman to be chosen as sole valedictorian at the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine (CBC News, 2020). Yet the chance of making it as a professional athlete is much less than the chance of attaining a postsecondary education and succeeding in professional work; in 2019, there were 18 Black Canadians in the NBA but about 1500 Black Canadian doctors. The idolization of sports heroes often reinforces racial stereotypes about Black athletic prowess and intellectual inferiority.

An additional problem undermines the argument that genes determine the behaviour of racial groups. It is impossible to neatly distinguish races based on genetic differences. Relatively consistent differences are observed only when comparing people from distant locales, such as Norway versus Eastern Asia. Within continental landmasses, genetic contrasts are negligible for adjacent populations because migration and conquest bring about genetic mixing. Such mixing prevails whenever supposedly distinct groups have been in contact for more than a few generations. In North America, for instance, it was not uncommon for White male slave owners to rape enslaved Black females, who then gave birth to children of mixed race. Many Europeans had children with Indigenous people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This fact undermines attempts to sort populations into distinct racial types.

We know from the census that ethnic and racial intermarriage has been increasing in Canada since at least 1871. The increase in intermarriage is one factor explaining why, in the 2016 census, 41 percent of Canadians (over 14 million of us) reported multiple ethnic or racial identities (Statistics Canada, 2019f). Usually, people who report multiple ethnic or racial identities have parents of two different ethnic or racial origins (Schimmele and Wu, 2015). A growing number of North Americans are similar to Tiger Woods. Woods claims he is of "Cablinasian" ancestry—part Caucasian, part Black, part Indigenous, and part Asian. As these examples illustrate, the differences among Black, White, Asian, and so forth, are often anything but clear-cut. In fact, some respected scholars believe we all belong to one human race, which originated in Africa (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, and Piazza, 1994).

Some biologists and social scientists suggest we should stop using the term *race* because humanity today has experienced so much intermixing that the term has lost nearly all meaning. However, most sociologists continue to use the term because *perceptions* of race continue to profoundly affect the lives of most people. Race is therefore a useful *sociological* concept insofar as everything from your wealth to your health is influenced by whether others see you as Black, White, or something else. However, the concept is useful only to the degree that it refers to the *social significance* people attach to perceived physical differences (e.g., skin colour), not to biological differences that shape behaviour patterns. In other words, we socially construct perceptions of racial difference—sometimes quite arbitrarily. For example, in the mid-1800s, many White Protestants in the United States regarded the Irish as "Blacks turned inside out," while even today many northern Italians think of Italians from Sicily and Calabria as Black (Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 1991). Similarly, during World War II, some people made arbitrary physical distinctions between Chinese allies and Japanese enemies that helped justify the Canadian policy of placing Japanese Canadians in internment camps. These examples show that racial distinctions are social constructs, not biological givens. In short, we must define **race** as a social construct used to differentiate between people in terms of one or more physical indicators, usually with profound effects on their lives. But this raises an interesting question. If race is simply a social construct and not a useful biological term, why do we use perceptions of physical difference to distinguish categories of people? Asked differently, why does race matter?

Race is a social construct used to distinguish people in terms of one or more physical markers, usually with profound effects on their lives.

Most sociologists believe that race matters because it enables the creation and perpetuation of social inequality. When the English colonized Ireland, the Americans went to Africa looking for slaves, and the Germans used Jews as a **scapegoat** for their deep economic and political troubles after World War I, they all created systems of racial domination. The establishment of colonialism, slavery, and concentration camps then led to the development of behavioural differences between subordinates and superordinates. For example, because North American enslaved people and Jewish concentration camp inmates had little motivation to work hard except the ultimate threat of the master's whip, they tended to do only the minimum work necessary to survive. Their masters noticed this tendency and characterized their subordinates as inherently slow and unreliable workers (Collins, 1982: 66–69). In this way, racial stereotypes are born (see Figure 10.1). The stereotypes then embed themselves in literature, popular lore, journalism, and political debate, which reinforces racial inequalities (see Box 10.1). We thus see that race matters to the degree that it helps to create and maintain systems of social inequality.

A scapegoat is a disadvantaged person or category of people whom others blame for their own problems.

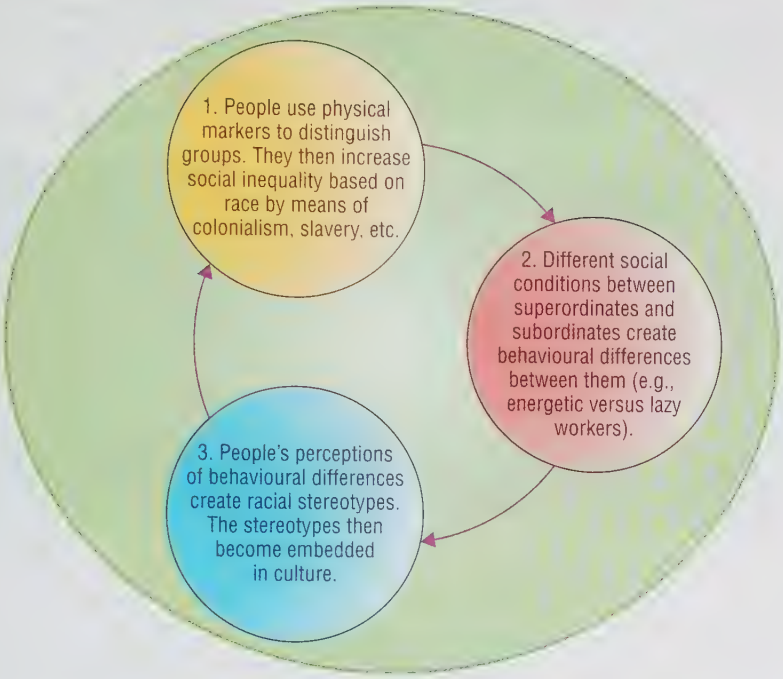

1. People use physical markers to distinguish groups. They then increase social inequality based on race by means of colonialism, slavery, etc.
2. Different social conditions between superordinates and subordinates create behavioural differences between them (e.g., energetic versus lazy workers).
3. People's perceptions of behavioural differences create racial stereotypes. The stereotypes then become embedded in culture.

FIGURE 10.1
The Vicious Circle of Racism

Ethnicity, Culture, and Social Structure

Race is to biology as ethnicity is to culture. A race is a socially defined category of people whose apparent *physical* markers are considered significant. An **ethnic group** is made up of people whose apparent *cultural* markers are considered significant.

An **ethnic group** comprises people whose perceived cultural markers are deemed socially significant.

However, just as physical distinctions between races don't cause differences in behaviour, cultural markers—language, religion, customs, values, and so on—are often not the main source of differences in the behaviour of various ethnic groups. Instead, *social structural* differences frequently underlie cultural differences between ethnic groups. Ethnic values and other features of ethnic culture have less of an effect on the way people behave than we commonly believe.

An example will help drive home the point. People often praise Koreans, Jews, and other economically successful groups for their cultural values, including an emphasis on education, family, and hard work. People less commonly notice, however, that Canadian immigration policy has been highly selective. For the most part, the Jews and Koreans who arrived in Canada were literate, urbanized, and skilled. Some even came with financial assets (Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld, 1993; Li, 1995; Wong and Ng, 1998). They certainly confronted prejudice and discrimination, but far less than did Black and Indigenous peoples in Canada. These *social-structural* conditions facilitated Jewish and Korean success. They gave members of these groups a firm basis on which to build and maintain a culture emphasizing education, family, and other middle-class virtues.

In contrast, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Indigenous peoples and the Black descendants of enslaved people were typically illiterate and unskilled, and they experienced more prejudice and discrimination than did other ethnic or racial groups in Canada. These social-structural disadvantages—not their culture—led to them being, on average, less economically successful than Jews and Koreans.

In general, much Canadian research supports the argument that culture, in and of itself, is unimportant in determining the economic success of racial or ethnic groups. Substantial differences *do* exist in the average annual incomes of some racial groups. For example, the average annual income of Indigenous peoples is substantially below that of White Canadians. So is the average annual income of non-White immigrants. The point,

BOX 10.1 Sociology and the Media

DISNEY'S AWKWARD LEGACY OF RACISM

Lifestyle pictures/Alamy

The 2019 live action version of Aladdin, starring Canadian-Egyptian actor Mena Massoud, reflects the ways in which Disney is changing its depictions of non-Western cultures.

When streaming service Disney Plus launched in late 2019, disclaimers were added to several of their old films to warn that they contained "outdated cultural depictions" (Associated Press, 2019). The films include *Dumbo* (1941), in which a bird named Jim Crow is based on a nineteenth-century Black caricature and the namesake of racial segregation laws in the United States; *The Jungle Book* (1967), in which monkeys are portrayed as criminal and stupid Black people; and *The Aristocats* (1970), in which Siamese cats play musical instruments with chopsticks and speak in a caricature of a Chinese accent. *Song of the South*, set on a plantation, was controversial even during its filming back in 1946, notably because it depicts enslaved Black people as always happy with their lot in life. It will not be released on Disney+ (Tobias, 2019).

Disney's 1992 version of *Aladdin* has been called an example of "orientalism," a term describing the ways in which Western imperialist countries have historically romanticized and stereotyped Middle Eastern cultures to help control them (Said, 1978). The film portrays bad Arabs as ugly people with thick accents, and good Arabs (Aladdin and Jasmine) as having European physical features and White American accents; in a word, the good Arabs are whitewashed (Alsultany, 2019).

For their 2019 live-action version of *Aladdin*, Disney consulted a community advisory council of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Muslim scholars and other community members to avoid repeating its earlier mistakes. Likewise, for *Frozen 2*, Disney signed a contract with leaders from the Sámi community (indigenous to parts of northern Scandinavia) to make sure their cultural depictions were accurate—something that was not a consideration when the first *Frozen* was released just six years before (Last, 2019). This change shows how quickly Hollywood has needed to alter its practices given our rejection of previously acceptable racial and ethnic stereotypes.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Some critics have argued that Disney is showing accountability through its racial disclaimers, while others think that the company is using them to dismiss serious issues with its films (Iati, 2019). What do you think?
2. Should Disney refrain from showing some of their old movies, or are there reasons why they might still be worth viewing?

however, is that these differences are due largely to such factors as the years of education attained by the average Indigenous person in Canada and the number of years the average non-White immigrant has been living in Canada. Little income difference separates White Canadians from the Canadian-born children of many non-White immigrants. A professor of law who happens to be of Indigenous origin earns about as much as a professor of law who happens to be White. The problem is that Canada has so few Indigenous professors of law. Note also that because of persistent racism, the annual income of some categories of non-White immigrants, notably Black men, remains below average (Block and Galabuzi, 2011; Boyd, 2017). We discuss this issue next.

Ethnic and Racial Stratification in Canada

UNEVEN PATTERNS OF OPPORTUNITY

As we saw in our brief comparison of Koreans and Jews with Indigenous peoples, what matters in determining the economic success of an ethnic or a racial group are the *resources* people possess, such as education, literacy, urbanity, and financial assets. We may now add that what also matters in determining economic success are the kinds of economic

opportunities open to people. The latter point can be seen clearly when we compare Canada in the mid-twentieth century with Canada today.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Canada was a society sharply stratified along ethnic and racial lines. The people with the most power and privilege were of British origin. WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) in particular controlled almost all of the big corporations in the country and dominated politics. Immigrants who arrived later enjoyed less power and privilege. Even among them, big economic differences were evident, with European immigrants enjoying higher status than immigrants of Asian ancestry, for example.

John Porter, one of the founders of modern Canadian sociology, referred to mid-twentieth-century Canada as an ethnically and racially stratified "vertical mosaic." He thought the retention of ethnic and racial culture was a big problem in Canada because it hampered the upward mobility of immigrants. In his view, the Canadian "value system" encouraged the retention of ethnic culture, making Canada a low-mobility society (Porter, 1965, 1979: 91).

By the 1970s, however, many Canadian sociologists, including Porter himself, needed to qualify their view that ethnic and racial culture determine economic success or failure. Certain events upset their earlier assumptions. The Canadian economy grew quickly for three decades after World War II. Many members of ethnic and racial minority groups were economically successful despite ethnic and racial prejudice and discrimination. Economic differences diminished among ethnic groups and, to a lesser degree, among racial groups.

Ethnic and racial diversity increased among the wealthy, politicians at all levels of government, and professional groups. Visible minority status, whether Asian, Caribbean, or Hispanic, had less bearing than it once had on educational, occupational, and income attainment in Canada, at least among those who were Canadian-born (Boyd et al., 1985; Brym with Fox, 1989: 103–13; Guppy and Davies, 1998; Lian and Matthews, 1998; Nakhaie, 1997; Ogmundson and McLaughlin, 1992; Pendakur and Pendakur, 1998; Pineo and Porter, 1985; Reitz and Breton, 1994). With some exceptions noted below, the children of immigrants who were members of visible minority groups actually achieved above-average success in obtaining education (Boyd, 2002). Apparently, then, for the great majority of Canadians after World War II, ethnic and racial culture mattered less than the structure of mobility opportunities in determining economic success.

Beginning in the 1990s, however, recent immigrants who were members of visible minority groups were less successful economically than one would expect, given their educational and other resources (Kazemipur and Halli, 2001; Li, 2000). Cultural values had little to do with this tendency. Canada experienced an unusually high rate of unemployment in the 1990s, hovering near 10 percent until late in the decade. That situation made it more difficult than in previous decades for recently arrived members of visible minority groups to succeed economically. In addition, although such immigrants were selected to come to Canada because they were highly educated, their credentials were often not recognized by Canadian employers. Accreditation mechanisms for foreign credentials are poorly developed (Reitz, 2011). Today, the problem persists. Given that at least half a million Canadian immigrants are involved, the annual productivity loss to Canada is well into the billions of dollars (Conference Board of Canada, 2016).

In 2019, the Canadian government created the Foreign Credentials Recognition Program. Given that fees for qualifying exams or additional coursework can amount to many thousands of dollars, the program provides loans to governmental and non-profit organizations to aid newcomers with these costs. While the program is an improvement, it could not come fast enough in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (Falconer, 2020). For example, Dr. Victor Aduayi is

Stuart Jenner/Shutterstock

Canada's immigrant population includes thousands of trained professionals like physicians, who have been working in less skilled jobs like taxi driving and retail because of the time and cost of getting their credentials recognized.

a community health physician who led medical teams through an Ebola outbreak in his home country of Nigeria before arriving in Calgary in 2018. When the COVID-19 crisis hit Canada in early 2020, Aduayi was working part-time in a pet store as an occupational health and safety advisor. We can only imagine his frustration at not being able to use his training to join in the fight during a time when Canada was turning to retired doctors and nurses in desperation for more medical help (Kaufmann, 2020; Khan, 2020).

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY: IS "VISIBLE MINORITY" AN OUTDATED CONCEPT?

The term *visible minority* is unique to Canada. It was enshrined in the 1986 Employment Equity Act to help identify segments of the population facing racial discrimination in hiring and eliminate it. A visible minority is defined as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Government of Canada, 1995). Partly because the term *visible minority* can lead to the false conclusion that all minority groups are essentially the same, many Canadian scholars now prefer the term *racialized person*.

Racialization refers to the process by which race becomes socially constructed, based upon things like language and ethnicity.

While race refers to a social construct applied to categories of people, **racialization** refers to the process by which those categories are constructed based on physical characteristics, as well as language, culture, religion, and so on (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2019). Racialized people are defined by their race; it is their master status, shaping many dimensions of their lives.

A racialized group need not comprise a numerical minority. In parts of Canada and the United States, most people come from many different non-European backgrounds. For instance, of the nearly one-third of a million people living in the Toronto suburb of Markham, about two-thirds are of Asian origin and just over one-quarter are White. As immigration from Asia and other parts of the world continues, the concept of visible minority will have diminished relevance. Overall, racialized groups are socially and economically disadvantaged. Thus, in Canada in 2015, racialized women earned 87 percent as much as White women. The comparable figure for racialized men was 78 percent (Block, Galabuzi, and Tranjan, 2019: 12). However, when groups are matched in terms of demographic and educational characteristics, the picture becomes more complex. Second-generation Chinese and South Asian Canadians are significantly *more* likely than third-generation White Canadians to be employed in high-skill and better-paying occupations. On the other hand, second-generation Arab, Black, and Latin-American Canadians are significantly *less* likely than third-generation White Canadians to be employed in such occupations (Boyd, 2017: 74). These findings suggest that, like *visible minority*, the term *racialized person* can paper over important differences between racial groups, and that it probably makes sense to analyze specific groups rather than overgeneralize.

Canadian Multiculturalism

After the 2016 US election, concern grew that Canadians might experience a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment like the one that swept our southern neighbours. However, by the time of this writing, that had not happened (Adams, 2019). Most Canadians view Donald Trump's stance on immigration with disdain.

One reason for the Canadian-US difference is that 12 million undocumented Mexican immigrants have crossed the American border, while nothing comparable has occurred in Canada. Trump and most of his supporters fervently believe that many Mexican migrants are criminals while others take jobs away from Americans. (These claims are bogus. US cities with the highest proportion of Mexican immigrants—El Paso, Texas; San Diego and Chula Vista, California; and Meza, Arizona—have the lowest urban homicide rates in the country (Chaflin, 2020), and undocumented Mexican immigrants tend to find agricultural, gardening, janitorial, housekeeping, and factory jobs that Americans don't want.)

A second reason for the Canadian-US difference is Canada's tradition of multiculturalism (see Chapter 3, Culture). After the government adopted multiculturalism as state policy in 1971, Canadian support for ethnic and racial institutions and respect for ethnic and racial differences grew for 34 years (Figure 10.2). True, in 2019, tolerance of immigrants

and visible minorities was at about the same level as in 2005, indicating that negative sentiment is still widespread. Yet over the past few decades, as pollsters have repeatedly asked Canadians what makes them proudest of their country, "multiculturalism" has steadily risen in the rankings and now occupies first place (Adams, 2019).

Still, racial and ethnic inequalities remain. As we have emphasized, such inequalities are more deeply rooted in social structure than in biology and culture. Said differently, the biological and cultural aspects of race and ethnicity are secondary to their sociological character when it comes to explaining inequality. Moreover, the distinction between race and ethnicity is not as simple as the difference between biology and culture. Groups once socially defined as races may be later redefined as ethnicities, even though they do not change biologically; Jews, for example; were categorized as a race in the Canadian census until after World War II. Social definitions, not biology and not culture, determine whether a group is viewed as a race or an ethnic group. The interesting question from a sociological point of view is why social definitions of race and ethnicity change. We now consider that issue.

arindambanerjee/Shutterstock

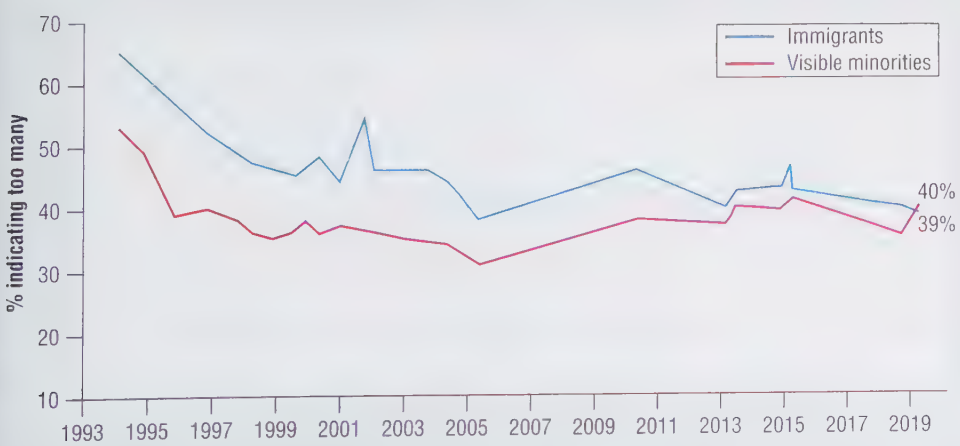
Protesters in Toronto march against Islamophobia and racism, 2017.

Time for Review

- How can social differences account for racial differences in athletic performance?
- What role does culture play in determining the success of ethnic and racial minorities in Canada?
- How does Canada's multiculturalism policy relate to our feelings about immigration?

FIGURE 10.2

Attitudes toward Immigration and Visible Minorities, Canada, 1993–2019



Source: Frank Graves, Increased Polarization on Attitudes Toward Immigration Reshaping the Political Landscape in Canada, Ekos Politics (2019)

Race and Ethnic Relations: The Symbolic Interactionist Approach

Labels and Identity

THE FORMATION OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES

Over a lifetime, people may experience a shift in racial or ethnic identity. Moving from one country to another or marrying someone of a different race or ethnicity may make them feel less German or Pakistani or Chinese. In some cases, people take on entirely new racial or ethnic identities. Change in social context often leads to change in relations with members of other racial and ethnic groups, which in turn produces change in racial and ethnic self-conception (Schimmele and Wu, 2015).

Consider how the birth of a new ethnic identity, Italian Canadian, occurred. Italy became a unified country in 1861. In the early 1900s, many Italian immigrants to Canada still did not think of themselves as Italians. They self-identified as people who came from a particular town or perhaps a particular province, such as Sicily or Calabria. However, government officials and Canadians in general identified all newcomers from Italy as Italians. Although the designation seemed odd initially to some of the new immigrants, over time, it stuck. Immigrants from Italy began to think of themselves as Italian Canadians because others defined them that way, resulting in the creation of a new ethnic identity (Yancey, Ericksen, and Leon, 1979).

According to symbolic interactionists, racial and ethnic labels and identities typically develop through a process of negotiation. For example, as the Italian Canadian example suggests, outsiders may impose a new label on members of a group. Group members then discard, accept, or modify the label. A kind of informal and unstated negotiation between outsiders and insiders eventually leads to the crystallization of a new, relatively stable ethnic identity. However, if the social context changes, the negotiation process begins once again.

One such case involves the labelling of the Indigenous peoples of North America by European settlers. When Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492, he assumed he had reached India. He called the Indigenous peoples *Indians* and the misnomer stuck—not only among European settlers but also among many Indigenous peoples themselves. Indigenous peoples still identified themselves in tribal terms—as Mi'kmaq or Mohawk or Haida—but they typically thought of themselves collectively and *in opposition* to *European settlers* as Indians. A new identity was thus grafted onto tribal identities because Indigenous peoples confronted a group that had the power to impose a name on them.

In time, however, an increasingly large number of Indigenous peoples began to reject the term *Indian*. White settlers and their governments took land from the Indigenous peoples and forced them onto reserves, which led to growing resentment, anger, and solidarity. Especially since the 1960s, Indigenous North Americans have begun to fight back culturally and politically, asserting pride in their languages, art, and customs, and making legal claims to the land that had been taken from them. One aspect of their resistance involved questioning the use of the term *Indian*. In Canada, current accepted practice is to use the collective term "Indigenous peoples," except in quotations, names of existing acts, and so on. When possible, specific groups are referred to by their preferred name (for example, Cree). New, more or less stable ethnic identities have been negotiated as the power struggle continues between Indigenous peoples and more recent settlers. As the social context changed, the negotiation of ethnic identities proceeded apace.

Ethnic and Racial Labels: Imposition versus Choice

Although race and ethnicity are socially constructed, people are free to choose their racial or ethnic identity to varying degrees, depending on time and place.

In Canada, the people with the most freedom to choose their identity are White Canadians whose ancestors arrived more than two generations ago from Europe. Thus, identifying yourself as Irish Canadian no longer has negative implications, as it did in, say, 1900. Then, in a city like Toronto, which had a substantial concentration of Irish immigrants, members of the

National Archives of Canada/C-030939

Many White Canadians lived in poor urban ghettos in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, a large proportion of them experienced upward mobility. This photo shows a family in a Manitoba tenement in 1912.

English Protestant majority often considered working-class Irish Catholics to be drunk, inherently lazy, and born superstitious. Anti-Irish sentiment sometimes exploded into violence.

The Irish found it difficult to escape their ethnic identity, even if they wanted to. However, Irish Canadians have since followed the path taken by many other White European groups, achieving upward mobility and blending with the majority. They are now free to choose whether and how to express their ethnic identity—whether they will march in a St. Patrick's Day parade, take pride in the remarkable contributions of Irish authors to English-language literature and drama, and so on. Their identity is no longer imposed on them, and their ethnicity is largely a symbolic matter, as it is for other White European groups that have experienced similar social processes. Herbert Gans defines **symbolic ethnicity** as "a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (Gans, 1991: 436, 2009).

Symbolic ethnicity is a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country, that is not usually incorporated into everyday behaviour.

Black people may well take pride in their cultural heritage and participate in such cultural festivals as the Toronto Caribbean Carnival, but their identification as people of African descent is not an option because a substantial number of non-Blacks are racists and impose their identity on them. **Racism** is the belief that a visible characteristic of a group, such as skin colour, indicates group inferiority and justifies discrimination.

Racism is the belief that a visible characteristic of a group, such as skin colour, indicates group inferiority and justifies discrimination.

One way to determine which racial groups are most likely to have their racial identity imposed on them involves examining day-to-day discrimination, such as being ignored by clerks in a store or being mistaken for a clerk because of one's race. Such actions are sometimes called **micro-aggressions**. According to a 2019 Canadian survey, Black and Indigenous Canadians are most likely to report experiencing micro-aggressions (Table 10.1).

Micro-aggressions are minor forms of racial or ethnic discrimination that occur in the course of daily interaction and are often not noticed by people committing them.

Data on police-reported hate crimes also provide insight into which groups are most likely to have their race (or ethnicity) imposed on them. Hate crimes include vandalism, threats, and physical attacks. In 2018, there were nearly 1800 police-reported hate crimes in Canada. Race, ethnicity, and religion were the motivating factors in 79 percent of reported hate crimes. Among racial, ethnic, and religious groups, hate crimes were most common against Arabs and Muslims, followed closely by Jews, with Black people in third place (Moreau, 2020).

Micro-aggressions are often associated with the concept of White privilege, which refers to unearned advantages that only White people enjoy (McIntosh, 1989). People who lack White privilege may be unable to find "flesh-coloured" Band-Aids that match their skin colour or they may be asked, "Where do you come from?" despite having a Canadian birth certificate and speaking fluent and unaccented English or French. Similarly, White people typically enjoy the privilege of being viewed as individuals, while people of colour are typically viewed through the lens of race. White people frequently deny this circumstance, thus perpetuating

TABLE 10.1

Day-to-Day Discrimination in Canada, in Percent, 2019

Source: Environics Institute for Survey Research, Race Relations in Canada 2019: A Survey of Canadian Public Opinion and Experience (Final Report: 2019). p 43 https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/race-relations-2019-survey/race-relations-in-canada-2019-survey---final-report-english.pdf?sfvrsn=ef8d61e3_2

	White	Chinese	South Asian	Indigenous	Black	Other
Others treated you as not smart	30	21	40	47	56	37
Others acted as if suspicious of you	24	18	34	50	55	30
Ignored, overlooked or not given service in a restaurant/store	25	28	31	44	42	31
Mistaken for someone who serves others	16	20	23	32	37	25
Treated differently by employer (hiring, pay, promotion)	16	15	21	30	23	21
Unfairly stopped by police	5	5	10	31	18	12

racism. The concept of White privilege illuminates the fact that for Whites, race is not a master status, and the identity of Whiteness is often unrecognized, as are the advantages it brings.

Racism mounts whenever a group feels threatened; some people look for a scapegoat to blame for the threat. The scapegoat's racial identity is strengthened as a result. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic fueled hostility toward Chinese people in North America, especially in the United States. The pandemic started in China, and some people, confusing the geographical origin of the virus with Chinese ethnicity, blamed members of the Chinese community for spreading the virus. Then, after the initial wave of COVID-19 infections crested in China itself, some people returning to the country brought new infections with them. About 90 percent of the returnees were Chinese, but that didn't stop anti-African hostility from growing; many Chinese citizens blamed African returnees, and then all Africans residing in China, for the new infections. As anti-African prejudice rose, anti-Chinese animosity grew in Africa, reinforcing racial identity in both places (Marsh, 2020).

Institutional racism occurs when organizational policies and practices systematically discriminate against people of some racial group or groups.

Critical race theory holds that racial and ethnical prejudice and discrimination are embedded in institutionalized ideologies and practices, not necessarily in the conscious actions of individuals. From this point of view, it is possible in principle that (1) individual members of a majority group are not prejudiced against minority group members while (2) legal, educational, health, and other institutions operate in a way that discriminates against the minority group, and (3) many members of the majority, while free of any personal prejudice, nonetheless justify the existing social hierarchy because they are blind to institutional racism.

You should not get the impression from our discussion that racism is confined to individuals. Racism is often embedded in the policies and practices of organizations. This phenomenon is called **institutional racism**, a key concept in **critical race theory**. According to critical race theorists, racial and ethnical prejudice and discrimination are embedded in institutionalized ideologies and practices, not necessarily in the conscious actions of individuals (Weiner, 2012). From this point of view, it is possible in principle that (1) individual members of a majority group are not prejudiced against minority group members while (2) legal, educational, health, and other institutions operate in a way that discriminates against the minority group, and (3) many members of the majority, while free of any personal prejudice, nonetheless justify the existing social hierarchy because they are blind to institutional racism (see Box 10.2).

We now turn to conflict theories, which seek to explain why racial and ethnic relations take different forms in different times and places.

Conflict Theories of Race and Ethnicity

Many White people of Southern and Eastern European origin have been in Canada for generations. Over time, they achieved relative equality with members of the Western European majority group, blended in with them, and therefore think of themselves today simply as

BOX 10.2 Social Policy

JURY SELECTION AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN CANADA

In 2016, Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley, a White man, shot and killed Colten Boushie, an Indigenous man. Boushie and his friends were on Stanley's property, apparently with the intent to steal. Stanley got a gun. An altercation took place. Stanley claimed the gun malfunctioned and "just went off" at close range. The shot killed Boushie, and Stanley was charged with second-degree murder.

At the trial in 2018, a firearms expert testified there was nothing wrong with the gun. A forensics expert found another part of Stanley's testimony problematic. When a person is shot at close range, a considerable amount of gunpowder is found on the victim. However, only extremely small traces of gunpowder were found on Boushie's clothing. The forensics expert testified that that was not what he'd expect for a close-range shot. In other words, the evidence was consistent with a long-range shot, suggesting not that the gun went off during a face-to-face altercation but that Stanley shot Boushie intentionally from a distance. Nonetheless, Stanley was acquitted in 2018.

In murder trials, the guilt or innocence of the accused is supposed to be decided by a jury that reflects community norms. The trial took place in Battleford, a Saskatchewan town in which one-fifth of the population is Indigenous. However, the jury at Stanley's trial was all White. That is significant because anti-Indigenous prejudice is stronger in rural and small-town Saskatchewan than anywhere else in Canada.

Why was the jury all White? Because, during jury selection, the lawyers were allowed to reject up to a dozen potential jurors without giving a reason for doing so. This practice, known as *peremptory challenge*, was permitted by section 634 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

There is no evidence to suggest that Stanley's lawyer was a racist. He acted completely within the law and in the interest of his client by rejecting potential jurors who were Indigenous. But the law—specifically, the principle of peremptory challenge—had racist implications in and of itself because it allowed Indigenous people to be rejected as jurors (Butt, 2018). The practice exemplifies institutional racism. Recognizing this fact, section 634 of the Criminal Code of Canada was repealed in 2019.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Health professionals recognize that the diets of many Indigenous Canadians are high in sugar, salt, and fat, and low in lean protein, vegetables, and complex carbohydrates. However, if you live in remote areas of the country, healthy food is very expensive. A kilogram of apples costs about $3.40 in Toronto versus $8.80 in the Northwest Territories. Is Canada's food distribution system an agent of institutionalized racism? Why or why not?
2. Educators know that student self-esteem is critically important to learning. Is a school system that teaches only the contributions of White people to human culture an agent of institutional racism? Why or why not?

Canadians (Boyd, 1999; Boyd and Norris, 2001). In contrast, Indigenous peoples, Québécois, Black people, and Asian Canadians are less likely to have assimilated into Canadian society. Conflict theories explain why.

Internal Colonialism

The theory of **internal colonialism** is one type of conflict theory (Hechter, 1974; Minnerup and Solberg, 2011). *Colonialism* refers to people from one country invading another country and in the process changing or destroying the native culture. The invaders take control of the native population and develop the racist belief that they are intrinsically superior to them. Consequently, the native people are confined to work considered demeaning by the invaders. *Internal colonialism* involves much the same process but it occurs within the boundaries of a single country. Because of internal colonialism, the colonized people are segregated in terms of jobs, housing, and social contacts ranging from friendship to marriage. Assimilation is therefore difficult. Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, France, Italy, Spain, Russia, and China have all engaged in internal colonialism. In Canada, the main victims of internal colonialism are Indigenous peoples, the Québécois, and Black people.

Internal colonialism involves one race or ethnic group subjugating another in the same country. It prevents assimilation by segregating the subordinate group in terms of jobs, housing, and social contacts.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA

One term that describes the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada by European immigrants in the nineteenth century is *expulsion*. **Expulsion** is the forcible removal of a population from a territory claimed by another population.

Expulsion is the forcible removal of a population from a territory claimed by another population.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A8223 (1)-(2)

Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A8223 (1)-(2)

The Canadian policy of assimilation: In its annual report of 1904, the Department of Indian Affairs published the photographs of Thomas Moore of the Regina Industrial School "before and after tuition." These images are "a cogent expression of what federal policy had been since Confederation and what it would remain for many decades. It was a policy of assimilation, a policy designed to move Aboriginal communities from their 'savage' state to that of 'civilization' and thus to make in Canada but one community—a non-Aboriginal one" (Milloy, 1999).

Expulsion is dramatically illustrated by the plight of the Beothuk (pronounced bee-AW-thik), Indigenous people who lived in what is today Newfoundland and Labrador. The Beothuk were Algonkian-speaking people who probably numbered fewer than a thousand at the time of European contact. In the sixteenth century, Europeans used Newfoundland and Labrador as a fishing port, returning to Europe each year after the fishing season. In the seventeenth century, year-round European settlement began. This caused a revolution in the life of the Beothuk because the Europeans viewed them as a nuisance. They even offered incentives to the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia to kill off the Beothuk. The Beothuk population declined and gradually withdrew from European contact.

As European settlement grew in the eighteenth century, the Beothuk were squeezed into the interior. There they competed with fur traders for scarce resources. Eventually the Beothuk were reduced to a small refugee population along the Exploits River system, living off the meagre resources of the Newfoundland and Labrador interior. The expulsion of the Beothuk from their traditional territories because of European colonization led to the tribe's eventual extinction. Today, about all that remains of the Beothuk, aside from their tragic history and a few artefacts, is a statue outside the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial legislature.

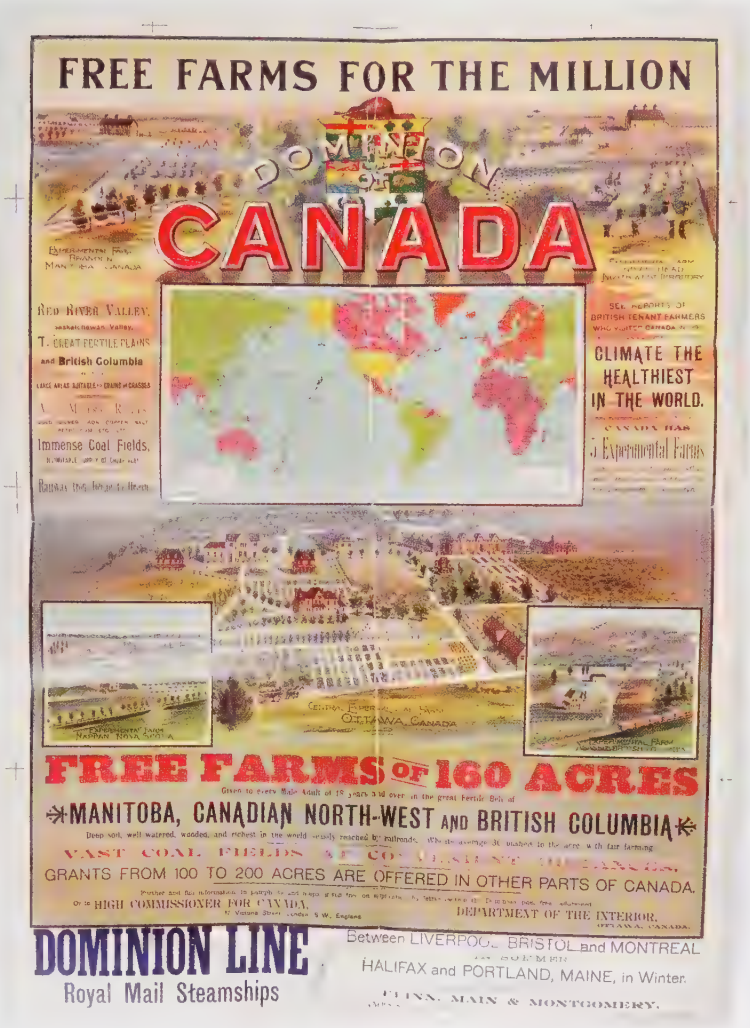
The story of the Beothuk is an extreme case. However, *all* Indigenous tribes had broadly similar experiences. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the European settlers' fur trade gave way to agriculture and the harvesting of timber, minerals, oil, and gas, Indigenous peoples were shunted aside so the Canadian economy could grow. At the time, Europeans thought they were "assimilating" the Indigenous peoples. The Indian Act spoke of the need to transform a hunting–gathering people into an agricultural labour force (Menzies, 1999). Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, spoke of the need "to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit to change" (quoted in Montgomery, 1965: 13).

Many Indigenous people understood the settlers' actions differently. For them, the passage of the Indian Act, the establishment of the reserve system, the creation of residential schools (see Chapter 3, Culture), and the so-called "Sixties Scoop" (which actually continued until the mid-1980s and involved the adoption of Indigenous children by non-Indigenous families as part of the residential school phase-out) were not just attempts at assimilation. These actions were efforts to obliterate the Indigenous heritage. It is in this sense that the Government of Canada has been accused by some analysts of perpetuating cultural genocide (Cardinal, 1977). Because the Indigenous population was cut by around 75 percent as a direct result of contact with White set-

tlers—about the same as the proportion of Armenians killed by the Turks in World War I and the proportion of Jews killed in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II—others have deleted the word "cultural" and accused Canada of genocide plain and simple (Brym, 2017b). **Genocide** is the intentional extermination of an entire population defined as a *race* or a *people*.

Adding insult to injury, early historical writing about Canada depicted Indigenous peoples as either irrelevant or evil. Typically, in *The History of the Dominion of Canada*, a book widely used in Canadian schools at the turn of the twentieth century, only five pages were devoted to Indigenous peoples (Clement, 1897). They are described as "cruel," "rude," "false," "crafty," "savages," and "ferocious villains" who plotted against the Europeans with "fiendish ingenuity" (Francis, 1992; Richardson, 1832; Roberts, 1915). Canadian schoolbooks continued to portray Indigenous peoples in much the same way until the mid-twentieth century.

So we see that, throughout North America, the confrontation with European culture undermined the way of life of the Indigenous peoples. Because of internal colonialism and, in particular, expulsion from their traditional land, Indigenous peoples in Canada were prevented from practising their traditional ways. The result is that, both on and off reserve, Indigenous people have experienced high rates of unemployment, poverty, ill health, and violence (see Table 10.2).


FREE FARMS FOR THE MILLION
DOMINION OF
CANADA
CLIMATE THE HEALTHIEST IN THE WORLD.
Immense Coal Fields.
FREE FARMS OF 160 ACRES
MANITOBA, CANADIAN NORTH-WEST AND BRITISH COLUMBIA
GRANTS FROM 100 TO 200 ACRES ARE OFFERED IN OTHER PARTS OF CANADA.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
DOMINION LINE
Royal Mail Steamships
Between LIVERPOOL, BRISTOL and MONTREAL
HALIFAX and PORTLAND, MAINE, in Winter.

National Archives of Canada/C-095320

An 1897 poster designed to recruit Europeans to settle in Western Canada. Although the land was characterized as uninhabited, in reality European settlement involved the displacement of Indigenous peoples to reserves on marginal land, ending a way of life that had endured for thousands of years.

Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was launched in 2008 to address the legacy of policies regarding Indigenous peoples and recommend new policies needed to correct past wrongs. Among other sources of information, it compiled oral and written histories of more than 6500 survivors of residential schools and their families. The TRC delivered 94 Calls to Action in areas including child welfare, education, language and culture, and justice.

With the assistance of historian Ian Mosby, Eva Jewell, a sociologist and Anishinaabeekwe member of the Deshkan Ziibiing (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation), has tracked Canada's progress in completing the TRC's 94 Calls to Action. As of the end of 2019, only nine had been acted upon. Jewell and Mosby (2019) estimated that, at the current rate, it will take until 2057 for all of them to be fully implemented. Progress is uneven across provinces and territories, improvements in some years may be matched by backtracking in other years, and some issues have not been addressed at all yet.

The most heartrending issue involved child welfare. Call to Action #1 demands that various levels of government reduce the number of Indigenous children in the care of the child welfare system (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Yet in Manitoba, which has Canada's highest per capita rate of children in care, more than 11 000 children were in the system in 2018, 90 percent of them Indigenous. More than one-half are in permanent care. Rather than decreasing, their number jumped 85 percent from 2008 to 2018 (Legislative Review Committee, 2018).

Many government policies form a patchwork of symbolic attempts at reconciliation. Jewell and Mosby (2019) argue that, too often, the interests of Indigenous people are seen as being at odds with the public interest: "The public interest, it seems, is always defined

Genocide is the intentional extermination of an entire population defined as a *race* or a *people*.

Connie Walker/CBC

During the Sixties Scoop, Indigenous children were removed from their families and ads were placed in Canadian and American newspapers to place them with non-Indigenous families. Some children were sold to American families for up to $30 000. Nora Cummings, former president of the Saskatchewan Native Women's Association, recruited hundreds of women for a meeting with the provincial minister of social services in 1973 to protest adoption ads such as those she holds in this photo (Fowler, 2018).

as being the interests of a non-Indigenous public that benefits from the direct violation of treaty relationships and exploitation of Indigenous land." They fear that the TRC will follow the path set by its 1990s predecessor, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The Commission opened the conversation on reconciliation, but it was largely ignored by government and its recommendations were never implemented (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2016: 143).

Nonetheless, examples of progress in the lives of Indigenous Canadians abound. A revival of Indigenous languages and customs is taking place. Increased college and university enrolment, trades training, and entrepreneurship are evident among Indigenous Canadians (Poelzer and Coates, 2015). New social movements such as Idle No More's promotion of land claims and environmental protection in 2012 and the Wet'suwet'en protest against the Coastal GasLink pipeline in 2019-20 are evidence of renewed political vigour in the Indigenous community. These latest waves of Indigenous protest raise the question of

TABLE 10.2

Social Conditions among Indigenous Peoples in Canada

	Indigenous Peoples	Non-Indigenous Peoples
Adult population with university degree (%)	10	26
Population residing in overcrowded dwellings (%)	12	2
Median income (index: Non-Indigenous = 100.0)	68	100
Population receiving social income assistance (%)	34*	5
Unemployment rate (%)	13	6
Projected life expectancy (years)	73	81
Youth suicide rate (index: Non-Indigenous = 1)	6	1
Population with diabetes (index: Non-Indigenous = 1)	5	1
Adult incarceration rate (index: Non-Indigenous = 1)	10	1

*On-reserve populations

Sources: Office of the Correctional Investigator (2013); Public Health Agency of Canada (2015); Sawchuk (2015)

Art Babych/Shutterstock

In 2015, Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, delivered 94 Calls to Action in his final report.

whether and in what form non-Indigenous Canadians should take responsibility for past and current injustices, a subject to which we return later.

THE QUÉBÉCOIS

A second form of internal colonialism involves not expulsion and genocide but **conquest**, the forcible capture of land and the economic and political domination of its inhabitants. For example, as part of their centuries-long struggle to control North America, the English conquered New France and its 60 000 settlers in 1760. The English thereby created a system of ethnic stratification that remained in place for more than 200 years and turned out to be a major source of political conflict (McRoberts, 1988).

Conquest is the forcible capture of land and the economic and political domination of its inhabitants.

The British recognized that any attempt to impose their language, religion, laws, and institutions in the former French colony could result in unacceptably high levels of resistance and conflict. Therefore, they tried to accommodate farmers and the Catholic clergy by reinforcing their rights and privileges. The British believed this approach would win the allegiance of these two groups, who would in turn help build loyalty to Britain among the population as a whole. In contrast, the British undermined the rights and privileges of merchants engaged mainly in the fur trade. So while agriculture, religion, and politics remained the province of the French, the British took over virtually all large-scale commerce.

As noted, this pattern of ethnic stratification remained intact for two centuries. True, by 1950, most farmers had been transformed into urban industrial workers. A contingent of Québécois had become physicians, lawyers, and members of the "new middle class" of administrators, technicians, scientists, and intellectuals. However, the upper reaches of the stratification system remained overwhelmingly populated by people of British origin. Social separation reinforced economic segregation. The French and the British tended to speak different languages, live in different towns and neighbourhoods, interact occasionally, befriend one another infrequently, and intermarry rarely. The novel that became emblematic of the social relations between French and English in Québec is entitled *Two Solitudes* (MacLennan, 1945).

Apart from its rigid system of ethnic stratification, Québec in the middle of the twentieth century was remarkable because of its undeveloped government services. Health, education, and welfare were largely controlled by the Catholic Church. Government intervention in economic matters was almost unknown. Because of this political backwardness, in the late 1940s members of Québec's new middle class, together with blue-collar workers, began campaigning to modernize the provincial political system. They pressed for more liberal labour laws that would recognize the right of all workers to form unions and strike. They wanted state control

over education and a new curriculum that stressed the natural and social sciences rather than classical languages and catechism. They desired a government that would supply a wide range of social services to the population. They demanded that the state provide better infrastructure for economic development and help francophone entrepreneurs expand their businesses. The partial realization of these aims in the 1960s came to be known as the Quiet Revolution.

The modernization of the Québec state failed to resolve four issues:

1. *The potential demographic decline of the Québécois*. By 1981, Québécois women were giving birth to fewer children on average than were women in any other province. In fact, they were having fewer than the 2.1 children that women must bear on average to ensure that the size of the population does not decline (Romaniuc, 1984: 14–18). Noticing this trend in the 1970s, many Québécois felt they were becoming an endangered species.
2. *The assimilation of immigrants into English culture*. Fears of demographic decline were reinforced by the preference of most new immigrants to have their children educated in English-language schools. Together with the falling birth rate, this development threatened to diminish the size—and therefore, potentially, the power—of Québec's francophone population.
3. *Persistent ethnic stratification*. The Quiet Revolution helped to create many thousands of jobs for highly educated francophones—but almost exclusively in the government bureaucracy, the educational system, and new Crown corporations, such as Hydro-Québec. It became apparent in the 1970s that management positions in the private sector remained the preserve of English-origin Canadians.
4. *The continued use of English as the language of private industry*. English remained the language of choice in the private sector because the largest and technologically most advanced businesses were controlled by English Canadians and Americans. This situation was felt particularly keenly when the expansion of the state sector, and therefore the upward mobility of the francophone new middle class, slowed in the 1970s.

Because of these issues, many Québécois felt that the survival and prosperity of their community required vigorous state intervention in non-francophone institutions. For example, many Québécois came to believe that most shares of banks, trust companies, and insurance firms should be held in Québec and that these financial institutions should be obliged to reinvest their profits in the province. They argued that the state should increase its role as economic planner and initiator of development and should forbid foreign ownership of cultural enterprises. Finally, the Québécois increasingly demanded compulsory French-language education for the children of most immigrants, obligatory use of French among private-sector managers, and French-only signs in public places. Most Québécois regarded these proposals as the only means by which their community could survive and attain equality with the English.

Since the Québec state did not have the legal authority to enact some of the proposed changes, many Québécois felt that the province ought to negotiate broader constitutional powers with the federal government. A large minority of Québécois went a step further. They became convinced that Québec ought to become a politically sovereign country, albeit a country economically associated with Canada.

The pro-independence Parti Québécois won the provincial election in 1976. In 1980, it held a referendum to see whether Québeckers favoured "sovereignty-association," that is, political independence and close economic relations with the rest of Canada. Nearly 60 percent voted no. A second referendum was held in 1995. This time, the forces opposed to sovereignty-association won by the narrowest of margins—about 1 percent. The sovereignty-association question then subsided, and the Parti Québécois lost three provincial elections in a row. It declined to hold another referendum when it formed the province's governing party from 2012 to 2014.

Over the last few years, Quebec nationalism narrowed its outlook and is now championed by a new governing party, the Coalition Avenir Québec. Aiming to protect Québécois culture and identity, the government has criminalized the wearing of religious head coverings such as hijabs, turbans, and kipot (worn by some Muslims, Sikhs, and Jews, respectively; see Chapter 3, Culture and Chapter 15, Religion for in-depth discussions). The party has

also reduced immigration levels. In other words, Quebec nationalism is now based less on citizenship (which would allow any Canadian to become Québécois) and more on ethnicity (which tends to restrict Québécois identity to French-speaking Catholics whose families have lived in the province for generations).

BLACK CANADIANS

We have seen that internal colonialism, whether accomplished by expulsion and genocide or conquest, creates big barriers to assimilation that can endure for centuries. A third form of internal colonialism—slavery—creates similar barriers. **Slavery** is the ownership and control of people.

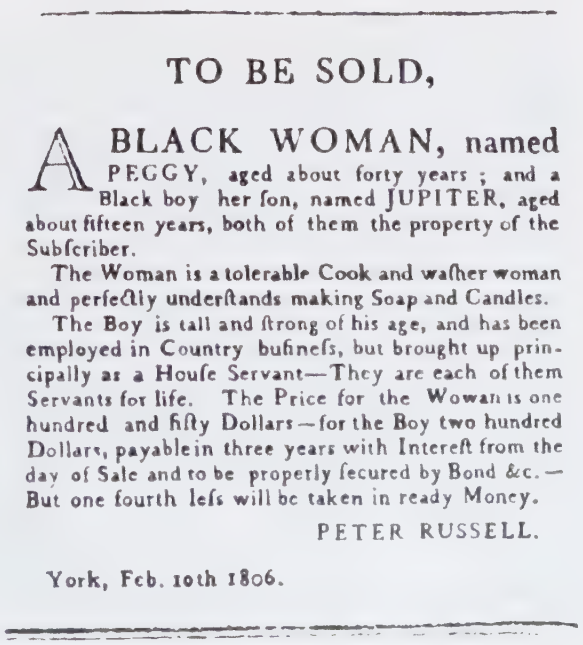
Slavery is the ownership and control of people.

By 1800, 24 million Africans had been captured and placed on slave ships headed to North, Central, and South America. Because of violence, disease, and shipwreck, fewer than half survived the passage. Enslaved Black people were bought and sold in Canada at least until the 1820s. Only in 1833, when the British government banned slavery throughout the British Empire, did the practice become illegal in Canada. Slavery was abolished in the United States 30 years later.

It is true that the extent of slavery in Canada was diminutive in comparison with its widespread use in the United States, where tobacco and cotton production depended entirely on the work of dirt-cheap Black labour. It is also true that for decades, Canada served as the terminus of the "underground railway," a network of assistance that smuggled escaped slaves out of the United States to freedom in Canada. However, after the US Civil War (1861–65) the practice of encouraging Black settlement in Canada was reversed. Government policy required the rejection of most immigration applications by Black people. This policy reflected a deeply felt prejudice on the part of the Canadian population that persisted throughout the twentieth century (Sissing, 1996). Moreover, social relations between Black Canadians and the White European majority were anything but intimate and based on equality. Until the middle of the twentieth century, Black Canadians tended to do unskilled labour and be residentially and socially segregated—for example, in the Halifax community of Africville, established around 1850 by runaway US slaves (Clairmont and Magill, 1999).

Canadian immigration policy was liberalized in the 1960s. Racial and ethnic restrictions were removed. Immigrants were now admitted on the basis of their potential economic contribution to Canada, their close family ties with Canadians, or their refugee status. As a result, Canada became a much more racially and ethnically diverse society (see Table 10.3). Black people, mainly from the Caribbean, now form the third-largest visible minority group in Canada, after Chinese and South Asians.

In recent decades, the social standing of Canada's Black community has improved significantly. Many new immigrants completed postsecondary education before they arrived. Others attended colleges and universities in Canada. Nonetheless, strong evidence suggests that Black individuals are penalized in the job market because of their race (Boyd, 2017) and Canada's criminal justice system is biased against Black men (see Chapter 7, Deviance and Crime). Black Canadians still tend to interact little with White Canadians of European descent, especially in their intimate relations, and they still tend to live in different neighbourhoods. Like the aftermath of expulsion, genocide, and conquest, the aftermath of slavery—prejudice, discrimination, disadvantage, and segregation—continues to act as a barrier to assimilation.



TO BE SOLD,

A BLACK WOMAN, named PEGGY, aged about forty years; and a Black boy her ſon, named JUPITER, aged about fifteen years, both of them the property of the Subſcriber.

The Woman is a tolerable Cook and waſher woman and perfectly underſtands making Soap and Candles.

The Boy is tall and ſtrong of his age, and has been employed in Country buſineſs, but brought up principally as a Houſe Servant—They are each of them Servants for life. The Price for the Woman is one hundred and fifty Dollars—for the Boy two hundred Dollars, payable in three years with Intereſt from the day of Sale and to be properly ſecured by Bond &c.—But one fourth leſs will be taken in ready Money.

PETER RUSSELL.

York, Feb. 10th 1806.

Upper Canada Gazette, February 10, 1806

Black Slave for Sale: Many distinguished Canadians were slave owners before 1833, including Peter Russell, who held positions in the executive and legislative councils and became administrator of Upper Canada.

THE THEORY OF THE SPLIT LABOUR MARKET AND THE CASE OF ASIAN CANADIANS

We have seen how the theory of internal colonialism explains the persistence of inequality and segregation between racial and ethnic groups. A second theory that focuses on the

TABLE 10.3

Canadian Population by Visible Minority Group, 2006 and 2031 (projected)

Source: Statistics Canada, Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population, 2006 to 2031, 91-551-XIE 2010001, 2006 to 2031 (2006). Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

	2006		2031 (projected)	
Group	**Thousands**	**Percentage**	**Thousands**	**Percentage**
South Asian	1 320	4.1	3 640	8.7
Chinese	1 269	3.9	2 714	6.4
Black	815	2.5	1 809	4.3
Filipino	427	1.3	1 020	2.4
Latin American	317	1.0	733	1.7
Arab	276	0.8	930	2.2
Southeast Asian	250	0.8	449	1.1
West Asian	164	0.5	523	1.2
Korean	148	0.5	407	1.0
Japanese	85	0.3	142	0.3
Other	213	0.7	489	1.2
Subtotal	5 284	16.4	12 856	30.5
Rest of population	27 238	83.6	29 222	69.5
Total	32 522	100.0	42 078	100.0

The theory of the **split labour market** holds that where low-wage workers of one race and high-wage workers of another race compete for the same jobs, high-wage workers are likely to resent the presence of low-wage competitors and conflict is bound to result. Consequently, racist attitudes develop or are reinforced.

social-structural barriers to assimilation is the theory of the **split labour market**, first proposed by sociologist Edna Bonacich (1972). Bonacich's theory explains why racial identities are reinforced by certain labour market conditions. In brief, she argues that where low-wage workers of one race and high-wage workers of another race compete for the same jobs, high-wage workers are likely to resent the presence of low-wage competitors and conflict is bound to result. Consequently, racist attitudes develop or are reinforced.

This situation is certainly what happened during the early years of Asian immigration in Canada. Chinese, then Japanese, and later Sikhs were allowed into Canada from about the 1850s to the early 1920s for one reason: to provide scarce services and cheap labour in the booming west. By the early twentieth century, Chinese-owned restaurants, grocery stores, laundries, and import businesses dotted the west and especially British Columbia (Li, 1998; Whitaker, 1987).

Head tax certificate: Immigrants from China were required by law to pay a "head tax" to enter Canada between 1885 and 1923. The tax began as a fee of $50 and rose as high as $500.

National Archives of Canada/C149236

Numerically more important, however, were the Asian labourers who worked in lumbering, mining, and railway construction. For example, 15 000 Chinese men were allowed into Canada to complete construction of the final and most difficult section of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), which involved blasting tunnels and laying rail along dangerous Rocky Mountain passes. The Chinese were paid half the wages of White workers. It is said that they "worked like horses." It is also said that they "dropped like flies" because of exposure, disease, malnutrition, and explosions. Three Chinese workers died for every kilometre of track laid.

Asian immigration in general was widely viewed as a threat to cherished British values and

institutions, an evil to be endured only as long as absolutely necessary. Therefore, after the CPR was completed in 1885, the Chinese were no longer welcome in British Columbia. A prohibitively expensive "head tax" equal to two months' wages was placed on each Chinese immigrant. The tax increased tenfold in 1903. In 1923, Chinese immigration was banned altogether. During the Great Depression, more than 28 000 Chinese were deported because of high unemployment, and Asian immigration did not resume on a large scale until the 1960s, when racial criteria were finally removed from Canadian immigration regulations.

Underlying European Canadian animosity against Asian immigration was a split labour market. The fact that Asian immigrants were willing to work for much lower wages than were European Canadians fuelled deep resentment among European Canadians, especially when the labour market was flooded with surplus job seekers. European Canadians formed "exclusion leagues" to pressure the government to restrict Asian immigration, and on occasion they even staged anti-Asian riots, notably in Vancouver in 1907. Such actions solidified racial identities among both the throwers of the bricks and their targets, making assimilation impossible.

In sum, the theory of split labour markets, like the theory of internal colonialism, emphasizes the social-structural roots of race and ethnicity. The groups that have had the most trouble assimilating into the British values and institutions that dominate Canadian society are those that were subjected to expulsion from their native lands, genocide, conquest, slavery, and split labour markets. These circumstances created a legacy of racism that resulted in social-structural impediments to assimilation, such as forced segregation in low-status jobs and low-income neighbourhoods.

Canadian Pacific Airline/National Archives of Canada/C-45080

With the introduction of the points system in 1967, nationality and race were removed as selection criteria from the Immigration Act.

Some Advantages of Ethnicity

The theories of internal colonialism and split labour markets emphasize how powerful social forces can impede the assimilation of ethnic and racial group members into a society's dominant values and institutions. These theories focus on the disadvantages of race and ethnicity. They have little to say about the advantages of ethnic and racial group cohesion. To understand why some European Canadians, such as those of Greek or Polish or German origin, continue to participate in the life of their ethnic communities even when their families have been in Canada more than two or three generations, we must turn our attention to these advantages.

Three main factors increase the significance of ethnic group membership for some White European Canadians who have resided in the country for several generations:

1. *Ethnic group membership can have economic benefits.* Immigrants who often lack extensive social contacts and fluency in English or French are most likely to experience the economic advantages of ethnicity. Because they often need to rely on members of their ethnic group to help them find jobs and housing, immigrant communities become tightly knit. However, some economic advantages extend into the second generation and beyond. For example, businesspeople who operate largely within their ethnic community—ethnic entrepreneurs—draw on their community for customers, suppliers, employees, and credit, and they may be linked economically to the homeland as importers and exporters. They may pass on their businesses to their children, who in turn may pass them on to the next generation. In this way, community solidarity provides strong economic incentives that encourage some people to remain members of their ethnic group, even beyond the generation that initially immigrated (Portes and Vikstrom, 2015).

2. *Ethnic group membership can be politically useful.* Consider, for instance, the way some Canadians reacted to the rise of separatism in Québec in the 1960s.

   To bridge the growing divide between francophone Québec and the rest of the country, the federal government under Pierre Trudeau's Liberals promoted a policy of bilingualism. French and English were made official languages, which meant that federal government services would be made available in both languages, and instruction in French, including total immersion instruction, would be encouraged in English schools.

   Members of some ethnic groups, such as people of Ukrainian origin in Western Canada, felt neglected and alienated by this turn of events. They saw little reason for the French to be singled out for special status and wanted a share of the resources available for promoting ethnic languages and cultures. As a result, the Trudeau government proclaimed a new policy of multiculturalism in 1971. Federal funds became available for the promotion of Ukrainian and all other ethnic cultures in Canada. This episode of Canadian ethnic history bolstered Western support for the Liberal Party for nearly a decade and softened Western opposition to bilingualism. Moreover, it helped to stimulate ethnic culture and ethnic identification throughout the country. We thus see that ethnicity can be a political tool for achieving increased access to resources. This is part of the reason for the persistence of ethnic identification for some White European Canadians whose families have lived in the country for generations.
3. *Ethnic group membership tends to persist because of the emotional support it provides.* Immigrant communities are most likely to experience the emotional advantages of ethnicity. Speaking a common language and sharing other elements of ethnic culture are comforting in a strange new environment. However, ethnic group membership can have significant emotional functions even beyond the second generation. For example, some ethnic groups have experienced unusually high levels of prejudice and discrimination involving expulsion or attempted genocide, and the resulting trauma can be transmitted from one generation to the next. In these instances, ethnic group membership provides security in a world still viewed as hostile—even if the threat of territorial loss or annihilation has long disappeared (Guruge and Butt, 2015).

   More generally, ethnic group membership can provide a sense of rootedness by offering emotional support beyond the second generation. Ties to an ethnic community can be a particularly important source of stability and security in a highly mobile, urbanized, technological, and bureaucratic society such as ours (Wilkinson, 2016).

These three factors make ethnic group membership useful to some White Canadians whose families have been in the country for many generations. In fact, retaining ethnic ties beyond the second generation has never been easier. Inexpensive international communication and travel allow ethnic group members to maintain strong ties to their ancestral homeland in a way that was never possible in earlier times. Immigration once involved cutting all or most ties to a person's country of origin. Travel by sea and air was expensive, long-distance telephone rates were prohibitive, and the occasional letter was about the only communication most immigrants had with relatives in the old country. Lack of communication encouraged assimilation into the newly adopted countries.

Today, however, ties to the ancestral communities are often maintained in ways that sustain ethnic culture. For example, roughly 25 000 Jews have emigrated from the former Soviet Union to Canada since the early 1970s, settling mainly in Toronto. They frequently visit relatives in the former Soviet Union and Israel, speak with them on the phone, and use the Internet to exchange email. They also receive Russian-language radio and TV broadcasts, act as conduits for foreign investment, and send money to relatives abroad (Brym, Slavina, and Lenton, 2020; Brym with Ryvkina, 1994). This sort of intimate and ongoing connection with the motherland is typical of most recent immigrant communities in North America. Thanks to inexpensive international travel and communication, some ethnic groups have become **transnational communities** whose boundaries extend between or among countries.

Transnational communities are communities whose boundaries extend between or among countries.

In sum, ethnicity remains a vibrant force in Canadian society for a variety of reasons. Although their families may have settled in this country more than two generations ago, some White Canadians still identify with their ancestral ethnic group. Keeping this in mind, what

can we expect in terms of race and ethnic relations in Canada in the future? We conclude by offering some tentative answers to that question.

Time for Review

- How does the theory of internal colonialism explain the historical processes through which Indigenous peoples have been decimated, the Québécois threatened, and Black Canadians exploited?
- How does split labour market theory help explain how powerful groups exploit ethnic differences to perpetuate dominance?
- What economic, political, and socio-emotional advantages accompany the maintenance of connections to an ethnic community?

The Future of Race and Ethnicity in Canada

The world comprises nearly 200 countries and more than 5000 ethnic and racial groups. As a result, no country is ethnically and racially homogeneous and, in many countries, including Canada, the largest ethnic group forms less than half the population (see Table 10.4). True, Canada's British roots remain important. Our parliamentary democracy is based on the British model. The Queen's representative, the governor general, is our titular head of state. We still celebrate May 24, Queen Victoria's birthday. And English is the country's predominant language, with more than 56 percent of Canadians claiming it as their first language. Our French patrimony is also strong, especially of course in Québec. Nationwide, 22 percent of Canadians claim French as their first language (Statistics Canada, 2011b). Nonetheless, Canada is one of the world's most racially and ethnically heterogeneous societies. It will become still more diverse in coming decades as new immigrants flow into the country, old immigrants assimilate, more Canadians from different ethnic groups intermarry, and ethnic identities blend; see Table 10.3, Table 10.4, and Figure 10.3).

As racial and ethnic diversity has increased, Canadian ethnic and race relations have changed radically. Two hundred years ago, Canada was a society based on genocide, expulsion, conquest, slavery, and segregation. Today, our society is based on segregation, pluralism, and assimilation. (**Pluralism** refers to the retention of racial and ethnic culture along with

Pluralism is the retention of racial and ethnic culture combined with equal access to basic social resources.

TABLE 10.4

Canada's 25 Largest Ethnic Groups, 2016

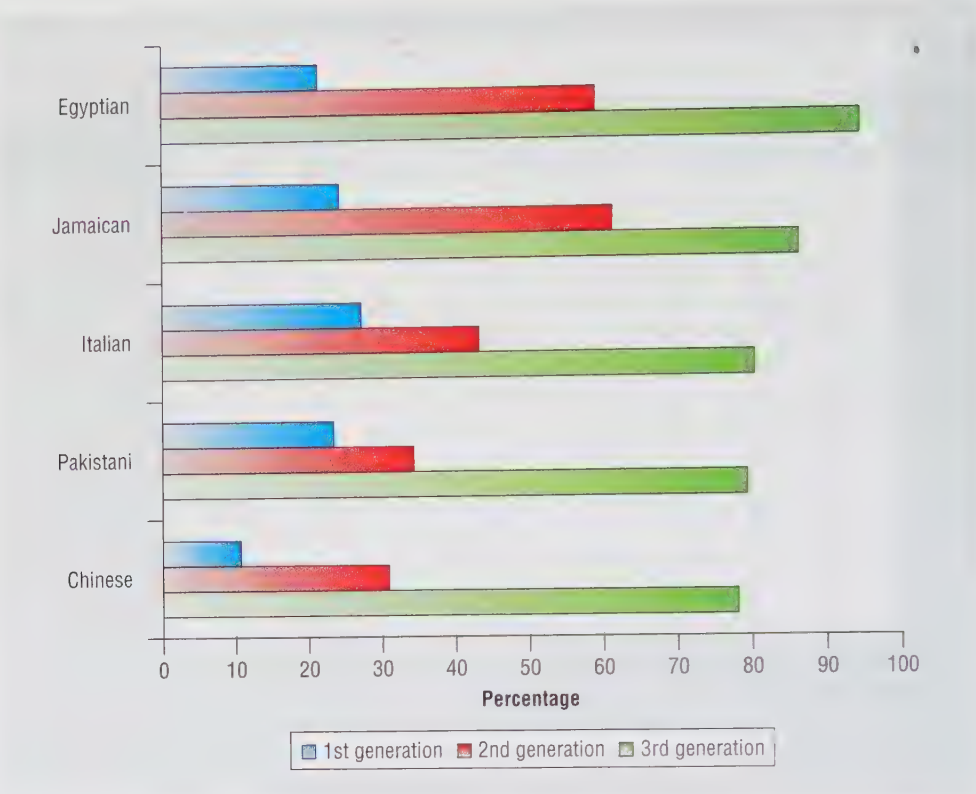
1	Canadian	11 135 965	14	Filipino	837 130
2	English	6 320 085	15	British Isles	644 695
3	Scottish	4 799 010	16	Russian	622 445
4	French	4 670 595	17	Métis	600,000
5	Irish	4 627 000	18	Portuguese	482 610
6	German	3 322 405	19	Welsh	474 805
7	Chinese	1 769 195	20	Norwegian	463 275
8	Italian	1 587 970	21	Spanish	396 460
9	First Nations	1 525 565	22	American	377 410
10	East Indian	1 374 710	23	Swedish	349 640
11	Ukrainian	1 359 655	24	Hungarian	348 085
12	Dutch	1 111 655	25	Jamaican	309 485
13	Polish	1 106 5855			

Note: Respondents could select more than one ethnicity. Change in the wording of the ethnicity question in the 2016 census resulted in a 54 percent decline in the count of the Jewish population since 2011. Canada's Jewish population is estimated to be about 390 000 (Brym, 2017d; Brym, Neuman, and Lenton, 2019: 11).

Source: Statistics Canada. Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. (2017i)

FIGURE 10.3

Multi-ethnic Canadians, Selected Groups, by Generation, 2016 (in percent)



Source: Statistics Canada, "Ethnic Origin (279), Single and Multiple Ethnic Origin Responses (3), Generation Status (4), Age (12) and Sex (3) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2016 Census—25% Sample Data. (2019f) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

Toronto-born and raised Drake comes from a mixed background. His mother is Canadian, White, and Jewish. His father is Black and Catholic. Is the future of Canada multi-ethnic and multiracial?

Kathy Hutchins/Shutterstock

equal access to basic social resources.) Thus, on a scale of tolerance, Canada has come a long way in the past 200 years (see Figure 10.4).

Canada is also a tolerant land compared with other countries. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, racial and ethnic tensions in some parts of the world erupted into wars of secession and attempted genocide. For example, in the 1990s, conflict among Croats, Serbs, and other ethnic groups tore Yugoslavia apart. Russia fought two bloody wars against its Chechen ethnic minority. In Rwanda, Hutu militia and soldiers massacred many thousands of Tutsi civilians. A few years later, Tutsi soldiers massacred many thousands of Hutu civilians.

Comparing Canada with countries that are not rich, stable, and postindustrial may seem to stack the deck in favour of concluding that Canada is a relatively tolerant society. However, even when we compare Canada with other rich, stable postindustrial countries, it still seems relatively tolerant by most measures. For example, in a survey conducted in 24 rich countries, 37 percent of Canadian respondents said they believe that immigration has a positive effect on the country. The comparable figure was 11 percent in France and Belgium, 5 percent in Italy (Nardelli, 2015).

A relatively high level of tolerance does not imply the absence of ethnic and racial discrimination and stratification, as we have seen. Canada's mosaic is still stratified, mainly along racial lines. Unless dramatic changes occur, a few groups will continue to enjoy less wealth, income, education, good housing, health care, and other social rewards than other Canadians do.

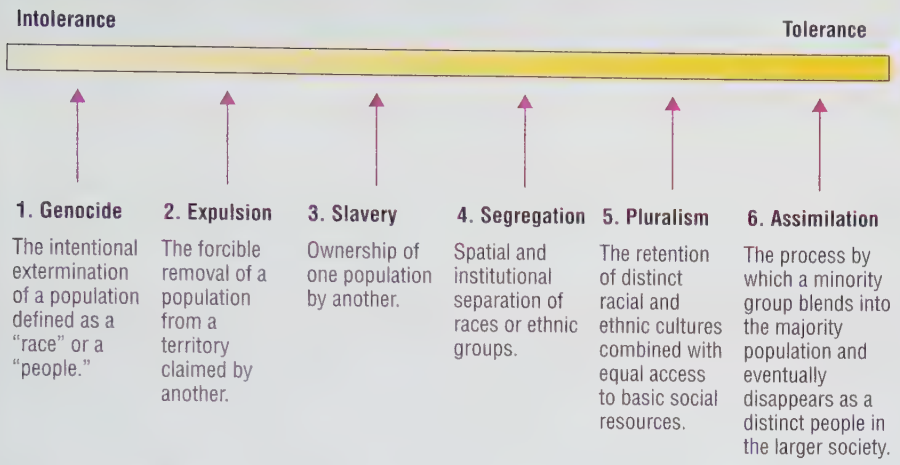

Intolerance
Tolerance
1. Genocide
The intentional extermination of a population defined as a "race" or a "people."
2. Expulsion
The forcible removal of a population from a territory claimed by another.
3. Slavery
Ownership of one population by another.
4. Segregation
Spatial and institutional separation of races or ethnic groups.
5. Pluralism
The retention of distinct racial and ethnic cultures combined with equal access to basic social resources.
6. Assimilation
The process by which a minority group blends into the majority population and eventually disappears as a distinct people in the larger society.

FIGURE 10.4
Six Degrees of Separation: Types of Ethnic and Racial Group Relations

Source: From Kornblum. ACP SOCIOLOGY IN A CHANGING WORLD, 4E. © 1997 South-Western, a part of Cengage, Inc. Reproduced by permission. www.cengage.com/permissions

Political initiatives could decrease racial stratification, speeding up the movement from segregation to pluralism and assimilation for the country's most disadvantaged groups. Such political initiatives include more compensation for historical injustices committed against Indigenous peoples. The historic 2008 apology by then prime minister Harper for the havoc wrought on Indigenous communities by Canada's residential schools, the $1.9 billion compensation package for victims of those schools, $875 million for victims of the Sixties Scoop, and the recent settlement of some land disputes also gives hope in that regard. In addition, ethnic and racial equality would be increased, and disadvantaged Canadians would benefit from affirmative action or employment equity programs that encourage the hiring of qualified members of disadvantaged minority groups; government-subsidized job training and child care; and the creation of a system for efficiently upgrading credentials earned abroad to meet Canadian standards.

Institutional reforms can also play an important role. Recall the argument of critical race theorists that racism is not necessarily the product of conscious decisions made by individuals. Rather, it is often the outcome of practices embedded in Canada's political, legal, educational, and other institutions that many people are not aware of. For instance, the education system promotes students based on merit. However, many students from disadvantaged racial backgrounds cannot compete with other students on an equal footing because, in their families, they are unable to gain language and other skills required for demonstrating merit in school. The principle of merit sounds fair, but in practice it establishes a subtle form of racism and inhibits reform. To deal with this problem, critical race theorists propose new programs to improve the preparation of students from disadvantaged racial backgrounds for the school curriculum and do a better job recognizing the value of instructing students in their first languages about their own cultures and histories.

Furthermore, critical race theorists argue that the privileged position of even well-intentioned members of dominant groups often limits their ability to understand, document, propose, and enact policies to address institutional discrimination. As a result, interests attached to privilege and power always predominate. It follows that a serious effort to address ongoing minority inequities must begin by listening to what minority group members have to say about their experience of injustice and inequality. This approach can begin to uncover the many ways in which apparently neutral policies framed in terms of merit, colour blindness, equity, opportunity, and the like, actually reproduce privilege (Delgado and Stefancic, 2013).

Time for Review

- What is the likely future of race and ethnicity in Canada?
- How does Canada compare with other countries in terms of its level of tolerance of immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities?
- What programs and policies are likely to reduce racial and ethnic inequality?
- What challenges are these programs and policies likely to face?

Summary

1. **How are race and ethnicity socially constructed? What roles do culture and social structure play in their perpetuation?**
   Many biologists suggest that race is not a meaningful or useful term because the biological differences that distinguish races do not predict differences in social behaviour. However, sociologists note that *perceptions* of racial difference have important consequences for people's lives. Whether a person is seen as belonging to one race or another can affect that person's health, wealth, and many other aspects of life.

   A race is a category of people whose perceived *physical* markers are deemed socially significant. An ethnic group is a category of people whose perceived *cultural* markers are deemed socially significant. Just as physical distinctions do not cause differences in the behaviour of races, cultural distinctions are often not in themselves the major source of differences in the behaviour of various ethnic groups. *Social-structural* differences are typically the most important sources of differences in social behaviour.

2. **How are ethnic and racial identities shaped through social interaction?**
   Symbolic interactionists argue that race and ethnicity are not fixed and they are not inherent in people's biological makeup or cultural heritage. Rather, the way race and ethnicity are perceived and expressed depends on the history and character of race and ethnic relations in particular social contexts. These social contexts shape the way people formulate (or "construct") their perceptions and expressions of race and ethnicity. Thus, racial and ethnic labels and identities are variables. They change over time and place. For example, cordial group relations hasten the blending of labels and identities, whereas ethnic and racial animosity hinders such blending.

3. **What role do power and privilege play in preserving ethnic and racial inequalities?**
   The theory of internal colonialism highlights the way powerful and privileged groups change or destroy Indigenous cultures, gaining virtually complete control over Indigenous populations, developing the racist belief that Indigenous peoples are inherently inferior, and confining them to work they consider to be demeaning. Internal colonialism prevents assimilation by segregating the colonized in terms of jobs, housing, and social contacts ranging from friendship to marriage. The theory of the split labour market highlights the way low-wage workers of one race and high-wage workers of another race may compete for the same jobs. In such circumstances, high-wage workers are likely to resent the presence of low-wage competitors. Conflict is bound to result and racist attitudes are likely to develop or be reinforced.

4. **What is the future of race and ethnicity in Canada?**
   Racial and ethnic identities and inequalities are likely to persist in the near future. Affirmative action programs, more job training, improvements in public education, the creation of training courses designed to upgrade the credentials of foreign-trained professionals, and improved state-subsidized health care and child care would promote racial and ethnic equality. However, institutional racism is subtly embedded in Canadian institutions, making progressive policies and programs challenging to implement.

11 Sexualities and Gender Stratification

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Describe the links between sex and gender as commonly understood.
- Identify the main social forces that influence people to develop conventional gender roles.
- Explain the reasons for changing attitudes toward sexual minorities.
- Analyze how the conventional social distinction between men and women serves to create gender inequality in the workplace.
- Recognize how gender inequality contributes to men's aggression against women.

The Gender Binary

Beyond the Binary

Bruce Jenner was hailed as the world's top athlete after winning the decathlon at the 1976 Montréal Olympics. Afterward, his image was used to sell breakfast cereal. He then acted in a number of TV shows and became a race car driver. Kris Kardashian became his third wife in 1991. Featured in the reality TV show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, the couple separated in 2013 and divorced in 2015.

In a widely watched television interview that April, Jenner publicly came out as a **trans** woman. Trans, short for transgender, refers to people whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex at birth. Bruce disclosed that he had struggled with his **gender identity**, his sense of belonging to a particular gender, since he was about eight or nine. As a boy, he had secretly engaged in cross-dressing and continued to do so as an adult. Before Bruce met Kris Kardashian, he had been on hormone replacement therapy. He quit the therapy when the relationship turned serious, but everyone in his inner circle knew Bruce had issues with his gender.

Trans, short for transgender, refers to people whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex at birth. Trans includes people whose gender identity is other than male or female since their gender identity is inconsistent with their assigned sex at birth. The latter are sometimes referred to as genderqueer.

In the months after the television interview, Jenner legally changed her first name to Caitlyn and began referring to herself using feminine pronouns. She underwent cosmetic surgery and in January 2017 completed sex reassignment surgery. Amid wild speculation about her sexual orientation, she said she is not attracted to men and identifies as **asexual**.

Gender identity refers to a person's sense of belonging to a particular gender, which may be male, female, or something else.

The story of Caitlyn Jenner prompts a series of questions about sex and gender. How do sex and gender differ? How are they related? Do only two sexes and genders exist? What, if anything, connects sex and gender to **sexuality**? How do most people react to sexual diversity? This chapter addresses all these questions.

An asexual sexual orientation involves a person not experiencing sexual attraction toward people of any gender.

A person's **sex** depends mainly on that person's genetic makeup. Almost everyone is born with 23 pairs of chromosomes. The last pair is used to determine a person's sex. Having an XX 23rd chromosome makes a person a woman. Having an XY 23rd chromosome makes a person a man. Some people are born with other 23rd chromosome pairs, such as X, XXY, and XXYY. Often such people are **intersex**, which means that in one or more ways they do not fit the conventional male or female sex categories. Their genitals, reproductive system, and secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts and body hair may not be distinctly male or female, as conventionally defined. Depending on how intersex is measured (there are 20 different intersex traits), anywhere from 1 in 2000 to 2 in 100 people are intersex (Davis, 2015; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Hird, 2005).

Sexuality refers to a person's sexual orientation, which comprises that person's sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, and sexual identity.

Few people undergo a genetic test to determine their sex. Instead, for most of human history, the presence of a penis or a vagina at birth determined whether the baby was a boy or girl. In the middle of the twentieth century, ultrasound technology made it possible to know the sex of a fetus in the eighteenth week of pregnancy. In 2011, in-home fetal DNA tests were able to produce reliable results as early as the seventh week of pregnancy. These technological advances greatly improved the accuracy and timing of information available to pregnant women but also ushered in a completely new set of social practices.

A person's sex depends mainly on one's genetic makeup—specifically, whether the sex chromosome is XX (female), XY (male) or X, XXY, XXYY, and so on. Sex chromosomes other than XX or XY are often associated with people who do not fit conventional male or female sex categories.

For example, gender reveal parties are all the rage these days (Gieseler, 2020). Typically hosted by expecting parents, a gender reveal party discloses the sex of the unborn child in a creative way to family and friends. In many instances, parents choose to be kept in the dark so as to share the surprise with their party guests.

Gender reveal parties are somewhat misnamed because fetal DNA tests only disclose sex. Many people think *sex* and *gender* are synonymous, but they are not. **Gender** refers to the socially constructed expectations associated with a given sex category.

Treating sex as equivalent to gender may seem logical to some people but, as in Caitlyn Jenner's case, sometimes such a match doesn't exist. Moreover, reality is more complex than the **gender binary**, which assumes that people must be either male or female. Some

people do not identify with either gender, others identify with both genders, and still others may alternate between identifying as male or female. For instance, many Indigenous peoples celebrate what the Ojibwa call *two-spirited* people, who are said to incorporate both masculine and feminine attributes. *Non-binary gender identity* is increasingly used to describe the varied experiences of those who fall outside the gender binary. Clearly, the relationship between sex and gender is not as straightforward as it may seem.

Inasmuch as they are intended to be fun celebrations, gender reveal parties are a reminder of the importance society places on gender. Consider that ultrasounds and fetal DNA tests establish expectations for a child long before birth, allowing parents to construct an environment fully prepared to treat the child in a gendered way. Eager parents don't wait to paint the nursery and select clothing until after a child is born—they want to be ready with the "right" colours from the outset. These and other materials will be used to teach the child his or her gender, reinforcing from birth the lesson that males and females are different, if not opposites.

At the same time, gender reveal parties cast into sharp relief the perils of buying into the gender binary. For most people, sex and gender combine in anticipated ways, reinforcing conventional beliefs. However, not everyone conforms to the gender binary. By eclipsing the full range of possibilities, the gender binary sets up some parents and children for failure. When a person doesn't fit neatly into male or female categories, feelings of shame, anger, and self-doubt may emerge. Parents, too, may question themselves, wondering what they did wrong in raising their child.

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The increased accuracy and wide availability of fetal DNA tests have boosted the popularity of gender reveal parties.

What should parents-to-be make of the fact that fetal DNA tests can identify an intersex fetus? Would the decision to terminate a pregnancy based on such a finding represent sex discrimination, a kind of sex-selective abortion? Given that gender reveal parties have become a focal point in pregnancy, how can parents best navigate the new terrain of intersex with family and friends? Wrestling with these questions makes it clear that recognition of diverse expressions of sex and gender is overdue. Perhaps recognition is a necessary step toward greater acceptance.

We begin this chapter by outlining two competing perspectives on the links between sex and gender. The first, informed by the gender binary, argues that gender is inherent in biological makeup and that society must strictly adhere to the biological template if it is to operate smoothly. Functionalist theory is compatible with this argument. The second perspective argues that gender is constructed mainly by social influences and may be altered to benefit society's members. Conflict, feminist, and symbolic interactionist theories align with the second perspective.

We also introduce a recent perspective, queer theory, to demonstrate that questioning the links between sex and gender has implications for how people think about sexuality. Most societies build on the logic that sex is binary and that sex ought to be aligned with gender. This logic, known as **heteronormativity**, expresses the view that sexual relations are appropriate only between people of the "opposite" sex. From this standpoint, **heterosexuality**—preference for members of the opposite sex as sexual partners—is seen as the only acceptable option. But like gender identity, sexual orientation is characterized by diversity. Thus, people might describe themselves as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, or something else altogether. Gender and sex have no necessary connection to sexuality.

The second half of this chapter examines one of the chief consequences of people learning conventional **gender roles**, or behaviours that conform to widely shared expectations about how members of a particular sexual category are supposed to act. As currently

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The gender binary refers to the categorization of people as exclusively either male or female.

Heteronormativity is the belief that sexual activity between people of the "opposite" sex is the natural expression of sexuality.

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constructed, gender creates and maintains social inequality. We illustrate this point in two ways. We investigate why gender is associated with an earnings gap between women and men in the paid labour force. We then show how gender inequality encourages sexual harassment, sexual assault, and intimate partner abuse. In concluding our discussion of sexuality and gender, we discuss social policies that sociologists have recommended to decrease gender inequality.

Some of the terms we have used may be unfamiliar. The meaning of some terms is in flux. Not everyone uses these terms in the same way. People may well develop different meanings for these terms in the future. Keep this situation in mind as you read on.

Heterosexuality is the preference for members of the "opposite" sex as sexual partners.

Gender roles are behaviours that conform to widely shared expectations about how members of a particular sexual category are supposed to act.

Time for Review

- In what ways do gender reveal parties reinforce the importance of gender in society?
- Why is it problematic to use binary categories for sex (male/female) and gender (masculine/feminine)?
- What are the assumptions of heteronormativity?

Theories of Gender

Essentialism is a school of thought that views gender differences as a reflection of biological differences between women and men.

Sociologists usually adopt one of two perspectives to explain the origins of gender differences in human behaviour. According to **essentialism**, gender differences are a reflection of naturally evolved dispositions. In this view, gender is part of the nature or "essence" of a person's biological makeup (Gelman, 2003). In contrast, sociologists who take the perspective of *social constructionism* view gender differences as a reflection of the different social positions occupied by women and men. For them, gender is "constructed" by people living in historically specific social structures and cultures. Conflict, feminist, and symbolic interactionist theories focus on different aspects of the social construction of gender.

Essentialism: Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology

In recent decades, sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists have offered the most influential variant of essentialism. According to sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists, people instinctively try to ensure that their genes are passed on to future generations. However, men and women adopt different strategies to achieve this goal.

Presumably, women have a bigger investment in ensuring the survival of offspring because they produce only a small number of eggs during their reproductive life. At most, they are able to give birth to about 20 children. It is therefore in their best interest to maintain primary responsibility for their genetic children and to find the best mate with whom to fertilize their eggs—a man who can best help support the children after birth.

In contrast, sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists claim that because most men can produce hundreds of millions of sperm in a single ejaculation and can repeat this feat often, they have less of an investment in ensuring the survival of offspring. From this point of view, a man increases the chance that his and only his genes will be passed on to future generations when he is promiscuous yet jealously possessive of his partners. Moreover, men evolve competitive and aggressive temperaments that include physical violence since they must compete with other men for sexual access to women (Ainsworth and Maner,

2012). As one evolutionary psychologist suggests, women are greedy for money, while men want casual sex with women, treat women's bodies as their property, and react violently to women who provoke male sexual jealousy. These "universal features of our evolved selves" supposedly maximize the survival chances of the human species (Buss, 2000, 2013).

Functionalism and Essentialism

Functionalists strengthen the essentialist viewpoint by claiming that traditional gender roles help to integrate society (Parsons, 1942). According to Talcott Parsons, women traditionally focus on raising children and managing the household, while men traditionally work in the paid labour force. Gender role socialization teaches each generation to perform these complementary roles.

Parsons argued that a series of "instrumental" traits—rationality, self-assuredness, and competitiveness—make up the essence of masculinity for boys. Meanwhile, "expressive" traits—nurturance and sensitivity to others—make up the essence of femininity for girls. Boys and girls first learn their respective gender traits in the family by seeing their parents perform their daily routines. The larger society also promotes gender role conformity by instilling the fear in men that they won't be attractive to women if they are too feminine, and instilling the fear in women that they won't be attractive to men if they are too masculine. According to the functionalist view, society becomes integrated and functions smoothly when men and women adopt conventional feminine and masculine characteristics.

A Critique of Essentialism from the Conflict and Feminist Perspectives

Conflict and feminist theorists propose four main criticisms of the essentialist view.

First, *essentialists ignore the historical and cultural variability of gender*. Wide variations are evident in what constitutes masculinity and femininity, the level of gender inequality, the rate of male violence against women, the criteria used for mate selection, and other gender differences that appear to be universal to the essentialists. These variations undermine the essentialist belief that behavioural differences between women and men are due to invariant biological differences. Three examples illustrate the point:

1. Since the 1960s, because of the rapid entry of women into the paid labour force, a shift has occurred in the qualities that men and women seek in their mates. Compared with half a century ago, women today are less motivated to seek men who will be good providers, and are more motivated to seek men with good looks. Men increasingly prefer women with good financial prospects and are less swayed by women's domestic skills (Eagly and Wood, 1999, 2013; Smiler, 2011).
2. Most researchers reject the long-standing assumption that males are *naturally* superior to females in math and science because evidence shows that males tend to perform better than females only in countries where gender inequality is high. Where males and females are treated equally, gender differences in math and science scores disappear (Ayalon and Livneh, 2013; Goldman and Penner, 2016).
3. The assumption that all men want to have sex with as many women as possible may be true of some men, but the "Casanova complex" turns out to be the exception, not the rule (Smiler, 2013). Moreover, it appears that "hooking up" is practised to the same extent by male and female college and university students, although males are more likely than are women to exaggerate the frequency of their sexual encounters (Currier, 2013).

As these examples show, gender differences are not constants and are not inherent in men and women. They vary with social conditions.

decrease their play with feminine-typed toys (Dinella, Weisgram and Fulcher, 2017; Jadva, Hines, and Golombok, 2010).

GENDER SEGREGATION AND INTERACTION

Anyone who has spent any time in the company of children knows they are not passive objects of socialization. Children constantly interpret, negotiate, self-impose, and resist ideas regarding gender.

Sociologist Barrie Thorne (1993) observed a Grade 4 and 5 classroom where the teacher occasionally asked the children to choose their own desks. Except for one girl, the children always segregated themselves by gender. The teacher emphasized self-segregation by pitting boys against girls in spelling and math contests. During the contests, the two groups antagonized each other and expressed solidarity with their own gender group. Similarly, when playing games in the schoolyard, the groups often *spontaneously* formed along gender lines. The children gave these games special names, some with clear sexual meanings, such as "Chase and Kiss." Provocation, physical contact, and evasion were all sexually charged parts of the chasing game.

Although Thorne found that children often self-segregated, she observed many instances of boys and girls playing together. She also noted much boundary crossing, where boys played stereotypically girls' games and girls played stereotypically boys' games. In the most common type of boundary crossing, girls played sports that were central to the boys' lives: soccer, baseball, and basketball. Boys often accepted girls who were skilled at these activities as participants.

Thorne also observed instances when boys and girls interacted easily and without emphasizing distinct gender identities. For example, less attention was paid to gender during activities requiring cooperation, such as taking part in a group radio show or art project. Another situation where gender played less of a role was when adults organized mixed-gender activities during physical education periods, in effect legitimizing cross-gender contact. A third context of mixed-gender interaction was in the relative privacy of neighbourhoods, where boys and girls often played together in a relaxed way. Gender segregation and antagonism were more prevalent in the schoolyard, where peers could scrutinize behaviour.

Thorne's research makes two important contributions to our understanding of gender socialization. First, children do not passively obey adult demands for gender conformity. They are actively engaged in the process of constructing gender roles. Second, even though schoolchildren tend to segregate themselves by gender, the boundaries between boys and girls change depending on social circumstances. Because boundaries are sometimes fluid and sometimes rigid, the content of children's gendered activities is by no means fixed.

Of course, adults typically have strong demands and expectations that contribute to gender socialization. For instance, many teachers believe that boys have a natural ability at math and are therefore more likely to succeed than girls are, while girls who succeed in math do so because of exceptional effort (Espinoza, Arêas da Luz Fontes, and Arms-Chavez, 2014).

Lisa Strohschein, one of this book's authors, still has vivid memories of her high-school experiences during the early 1980s. As a straight "A" student in elementary school, she was shocked when she entered high school. "I still got A's in English and the social sciences but my math marks dropped like a rock. To my horror, I failed my first math test. I was devastated. Today, I recognize that there were large deficits in the math curriculum of my elementary school that didn't adequately prepare me for high-school math. But back then,

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In her research on schoolchildren, sociologist Barrie Thorne noticed much "boundary crossing" between boys and girls. Boys often accepted girls as participants in soccer, baseball, and basketball games when the girls demonstrated skill at these sports.

I thought the problem was with me. So I went to the math teacher to find out what I needed to do to get better marks. He said, 'Lisa, it's not all that important for you to do well in math. After all, where are you going to use it anyway? Housewives don't really need algebra or geometry.'

"As it turns out, I became a sociologist specializing in statistical analysis. Without advanced math skills, I wouldn't be able to do my research. I still wonder what my life would look like if I had taken my high-school teacher's comments to heart and hadn't ventured to enrol in a statistics class once I entered university."

THE MASS MEDIA AND BODY IMAGE

The social construction of gender also takes place outside school walls. For example, children, adolescents, and adults continue to negotiate gender roles as they interact with the mass media.

If you systematically observe the roles played by women and men in television, movies, magazines, music videos, TV commercials, and print media advertisements, you will discover a long-established pattern. Although females compose half the population, they are generally underrepresented as characters on television and on the big screen (Neville and Anastasio, 2019). To the extent that males are shown more frequently in movies than are females, researchers suggest that girls may view their stories as less important than the stories of boys.

When female characters are featured, they tend to be portrayed in stereotypical ways. Women are often seen cleaning house, taking care of children, making meals, and modelling clothes. Men are not (Matthes, Prieler, and Adam, 2016; Paek, Nelson, and Vilela, 2010). Women are generally more concerned than men are about their physical attractiveness, signalling to the audience that women are supposed to serve as objects of male desire. Men, on the other hand, often tend to be cast as playboys who spend their waking moments in search of sexual conquests (Zayer et al., 2012). And even though the portrayal of women and girls in film and television has become more progressive and varied over time, the message the audience receives most frequently about gender is that females are physically weaker, more submissive, and more nurturing than are males (Coyne et al., 2016; England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek, 2011).

Media images present a view of the world as normal, expected, and desirable. By framing our reality, they influence our behaviour. Some people even try to shape their own bodies and physical appearance after the images they see on TV (Wegenstein and Ruck, 2011). The ideal female form in contemporary North American culture is sexualized and thin, so most women strive for those ideals in their own bodies.

In contemporary culture, female breasts are not valued for what they do, but for how they look. One recent study analyzed women's satisfaction with their breast size in 40 countries (Swami et al., 2020). Nearly 20 000 women, ranging in age from 19 to 94, were shown 14 computer-generated images of women in succession, each with larger breasts, and asked to select the image that most closely matched their current breast size. Then, they were asked to select the image they would most like to resemble. Some 47.5 percent of women desired larger breasts than they currently had, 23.2 percent desired smaller breasts, and just 29.3 percent were satisfied with their breast size. Widespread dissatisfaction was associated with poor self-esteem and unhappiness.

Women have always been expected to base their worth on whether men find them physically attractive. But more than ever, images of women in the media are now hypersexualized (Ward, 2016). Advertisements routinely show scantily clad women in sexually provocative poses. Often, the camera is frozen on a sexually charged moment, sometimes capturing the vulnerability of a woman on the verge of being overpowered by a man or group of men. Researchers found that nearly 10 percent of ads in the top-selling magazines of 2002 showed lifeless or unconscious women posing sexually, or men sexually dominating women, lying to or tricking them, or watching them without their knowledge in inappropriate settings (Stankiewicz and Roselli, 2008). The message for men who observe these images is that masculinity means taking control of women's bodies (Orenstein, 2020).

Approximately 10 percent of print advertisements depict women as sexual victims.

FILIPPO MONTEFORTE/AFP/Getty Images

MALE–FEMALE INTERACTION

Children learn gender roles in the family, at school, and through the mass media. These roles form the basis of their social relations as adults. For example, as children participate in sports in school and elsewhere, their experiences become increasingly sex segregated (boys and girls are less likely to compete against each other) and gender-typed (sports become coded as masculine, feminine, or neutral). Many boys gravitate toward team sports like soccer, rugby, ice hockey, and football (Wellard, 2009). In their teams, they learn that social interaction involves competition, conflict, self-reliance, and hierarchy (leaders versus led). They also learn to boast about their talents and that it is important to be the centre of attention (Messner, 1995).

Girls, on the other hand, are often encouraged to participate in gymnastics, synchronized swimming, tennis, and ice skating. These sports are coded feminine because they involve less physical contact and allow participants to demonstrate grace, expressivity, and beauty (Hardin and Greer, 2009; Sobal and Milgrim, 2019).

Girls who aspire to play male-coded team sports in high school face numerous obstacles. Just ask Hayley Wickenheiser, four-time gold medal winner in women's ice hockey at the Olympics and recent inductee into the Hockey Hall of Fame. She still remembers the strange looks she got in high school each time she set foot on the ice (Hornby, 2019). Research confirms most girls absorb the message that elite team sports are not for them: They generally decrease their involvement in team sports as they progress through high school (Lau et al., 2019).

The lack of female representation carries over to the male-dominated world of sports journalism. The prevailing attitude is that women shouldn't talk sports (Serazio, 2019). Women who do land jobs in sports journalism tend to be relegated to sideline updates and coach interviews. Few make it to the broadcast booth. Harassment of female sports journalists in person and on social media is pervasive (Antunovic, 2019).

More is at stake here than whether and how women have a voice in the sports world. Gender-specific interaction styles have serious implications throughout the workplace in terms of who is heard and who gets credit. In the 1990s, linguist Deborah Tannen assessed conversations in the workplace (Tannen, 1994). She discovered that women tend to talk in ways that make them seem less competent and confident. For example, Tannen observed a female office manager who didn't want to appear bossy and was keen to maintain consensus among her co-workers. However, her effort to solicit the opinions of others before making important decisions was regarded by her male boss as indecisive. When recruiting a leader for an upper-management position, he overlooked the woman and selected an assertive man.

More than 90 percent of sports journalists are men (Serazio, 2019).

Jakkrit Orrasri/Shutterstock

Gender also matters when it comes to academic research. Male and female scholars tend to behave differently, with corresponding consequences for career advancement (Hesli et al., 2012; Perez, 2019). One study found female professors were much more likely to get tenure if they had sole-authored rather than co-authored articles. However, co-authorship was unrelated to tenure decisions for male professors. The authors concluded women had to demonstrate

independent scholarship in ways that men did not (Chenoweth et al., 2016). Publications by male authors are cited more frequently than are publications by female authors (Larivière et al., 2013). This matters because the number of citations an article receives is one measure of its impact and is therefore used to evaluate job performance. Finally, male professors promote themselves in ways that female professors generally do not. Men cite their own work 50 percent more often than women do (King et al., 2017). Female professors rate their own competence more harshly than is the case when male professors self-assess, with the consequence that, at comparable levels, female professors are less likely than men to apply for and thus receive research awards (Correll, 2001).

Because of these differences, women are not recognized at the same level as men for the work they do. This may partly explain the existence of the **glass ceiling**, a social barrier that makes it difficult for women to rise to the top. As we will soon see, the glass ceiling is supported by other factors such as outright discrimination and women's disproportionate commitment to family responsibilities. Nevertheless, gender differences in interaction style seem to play an independent role in restricting women's career progress.

The glass ceiling is a social barrier that makes it difficult for women to rise to the top level of management.

Time for Review

- How does essentialism support the functionalist depiction of traditional gender roles?
- According to conflict theorists and feminists, what are the weaknesses of essentialism?
- What evidence suggests that gender is largely learned through socialization processes?
- What are the consequences for girls and women of the mass media promoting sexualized bodies as a cultural ideal?

Sexuality

Queer Theory and Sexual Diversity

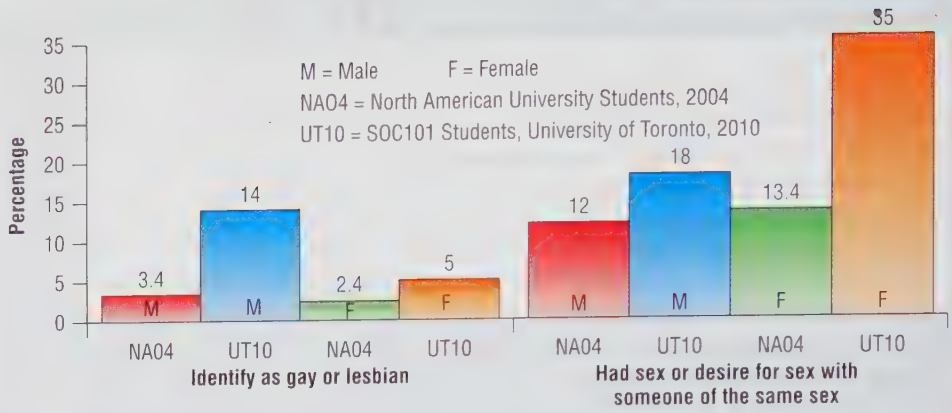
Whereas feminists question the links between sex and gender, queer theorists turn their attention to sexuality. Queer theory has been critical of feminists who argue that the basic conflict in society is between women and men. Queer theorists contend that viewing the world in that way reinforces the gender binary. The gender binary leads to the expectation that sexual relations should only occur between people of the opposite sex. For queer theorists, there is no necessary connection between sex, gender, and sexuality; people's capacity for erotic expression cannot be reduced to sex or gender.

Borrowing from feminism, queer theorists say that sexuality is something that we do, not something that we are. When sexuality is viewed as a performance rather than a characteristic of the individual, it is possible to see sexuality as socially constructed. As such, the meaning of heterosexuality and homosexuality varies over time and by context (Fischer, 2013). Consequently, it cannot be said that heterosexuality is natural or normal and that homosexuality is unnatural and deviant, only that they have been defined in this way by people in certain times and places.

Thus, Michel Foucault (1981) noted that the term "homosexuality" is a relatively recent invention. It emerged in the 1870s when medical practitioners began to frame same-sex acts as a characteristic of a certain kind of individual rather than a temptation to which anyone might succumb. Although same-sex relations have taken place throughout history, Foucault claimed it was only when homosexuality emerged as a distinct social category that a culture and an identity began to form around homosexuality. The notion of "coming out of the closet" is a modern invention: Declaring oneself to be gay became possible only when homosexuality was socially recognized as a sexual identity.

FIGURE 11.2

Sexual Orientation Indicators, North American University Students, 2004, and University of Toronto SOC101 Students, 2010 (percentage)



Sources: Brym (2010a); Ellis, Robb, and Burke (2005)

Sexual identity refers to the label people attach to their own sexuality.

Sexual attraction describes the gender of people to whom one is sexually attracted.

Sexual behaviour refers to the manner in which people experience and express their sexuality.

Today, scholars recognize sexuality is multifaceted (Diamond, 2016). **Sexual identity** refers to the label people attach to their own sexuality; **sexual attraction** describes the gender of those to whom people are sexually attracted; and **sexual behaviour** refers to the manner in which people experience and express their sexuality. Sexual identity, sexual attraction, and sexual behaviour do not always align. For example, a male might identify as gay and be attracted to same-sex partners but never engage in sexual behaviour with a same-sex partner. Indeed, researchers commonly find more people who say they are attracted to people of the same sex than identify as gay or lesbian. In a 2004 survey of North American university students, men were 3.5 times as likely to say they had same-sex experiences and desires as they were to identify as gay, while women were 5.6 times as likely to say they had same-sex sexual experiences or desires as they were to identify as lesbians (see Figure 11.2; Geary et al., 2018; Ybarra et al., 2019)). In 2010, one of this book's authors surveyed students of his large introductory sociology class at the University of Toronto on their sexual orientation. He found a considerably higher percentage identified as gay than was found in the 2004 North American university survey. Probable reasons for the difference include the following: (1) Toronto is a large urban centre where liberal attitudes, including attitudes toward sexuality, are more widespread than they are in North America as a whole; (2) six years had passed between the two surveys, during which attitudes became more liberal; and (3) Toronto is one of the three biggest gay communities in North America (the others are New York and San Francisco) and is therefore especially attractive to gays.

Justin Trudeau and his son, Hadrian, march in the Vancouver Pride Parade. Trudeau was the first sitting prime minister to take part in a pride parade. Today, it has become commonplace for politicians to attend such events.

Joe Ng Photography/Shutterstock

Beyond Heteronormativity

Two factors, one scientific, the other political, are chiefly responsible for gays and lesbians gaining more acceptance in much of the world over the past century.

In the twentieth century, sexologists—psychologists and physicians who study sexual practices scientifically—recognized the wide range of existing sexual practices. Alfred Kinsey, a pioneer in this field, interviewed thousands of men and women in the 1940s. He found that homosexual practices were widespread. As a result, he argued, homosexuality could hardly be considered an illness, as it was widely perceived at the time (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, 1948; Kinsey et al, 1953).

While sexologists provided a scientific basis for believing that sexual diversity was normal, sexual minorities themselves provided the social and political energy to change public opinion. Especially since the 1970s, gays and lesbians have gone public and have built large communities and subcultures, particularly in major urban areas (Greenhill, 2001; Ingram, 2001; Owen, 2001). They have also organized demonstrations, parades, and political pressure groups to convey their self-confidence and demand the same rights as the heterosexual majority (Goldie, 2001). These activities have gone far to legitimize all forms of sexual diversity (see Box 11.1).

BOX 11.1 Sociology and the Media

THE IMITATION GAME

Alan Turing was the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence. Until recently, few people knew he was gay. By contrasting his accomplishments with his outsider status as a gay man, *The Imitation Game*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch in the leading role, provides a window into the secrecy and shame that gay men once lived with in the United Kingdom.

Aware from an early age of his sexual orientation, Turing learned to bury his feelings. What could not be hidden was his mathematical genius. After graduating with a PhD in mathematics from Princeton in 1938, Turing returned to England to take a part-time job with the Government Code and Cypher School (GCCS), a British code-breaking organization located in Bletchley Park.

When World War II broke out, Turing worked round the clock with a team of cryptanalysts. Their task was to decipher the encrypted messages the Germans used to communicate with one another about their war plans. It was considered an impossible task. Eventually, he and his team developed a machine that could decode German transmissions. Hailed by Winston Churchill as the single biggest contribution to the Allied victory, Turing's invention saved millions of lives, hastening the end of World War II.

Less than a decade later, Turing was arrested and convicted of gross indecency. He no longer cared about hiding his sexuality. To avoid prison, Turing chose to submit to two years of estrogen hormone therapy, a form of chemical castration. The medication rendered him impotent. It also sickened him in other ways. But worse consequences followed. As a result of his conviction, Turing's security clearance was revoked and he was barred from continuing his work with cryptography at the GCCS. In 1954, weeks before his 42nd birthday, Alan Turing ended his life.

The Imitation Game was nominated for eight Academy Awards, but its influence extended beyond Hollywood. In 2016, the British government announced that it would pardon the men who shared Turning's fate in the criminal justice system. About 65 000 people convicted of engaging in same-sex relations under the British "gross indecency" law, which was finally repealed in 2003, were eligible to be pardoned. Sadly, only 15 000 of the men were still alive when the announcement was made. In 2019, fully 65 years after his suicide, the Bank of England announced that World War II hero Alan Turing would appear on the new £50 banknote.

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Canadian Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, introduces the £50 Alan Turing banknote in 2019.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How would audiences and critics have reacted if *The Imitation Game* were released in the early 1960s? Why?
2. Some members of the gay community objected that *The Imitation* Game downplayed Turing's sexuality. Would depicting Turing's sexual practices in greater detail have received a less welcome reception by filmgoers? Why or why not?

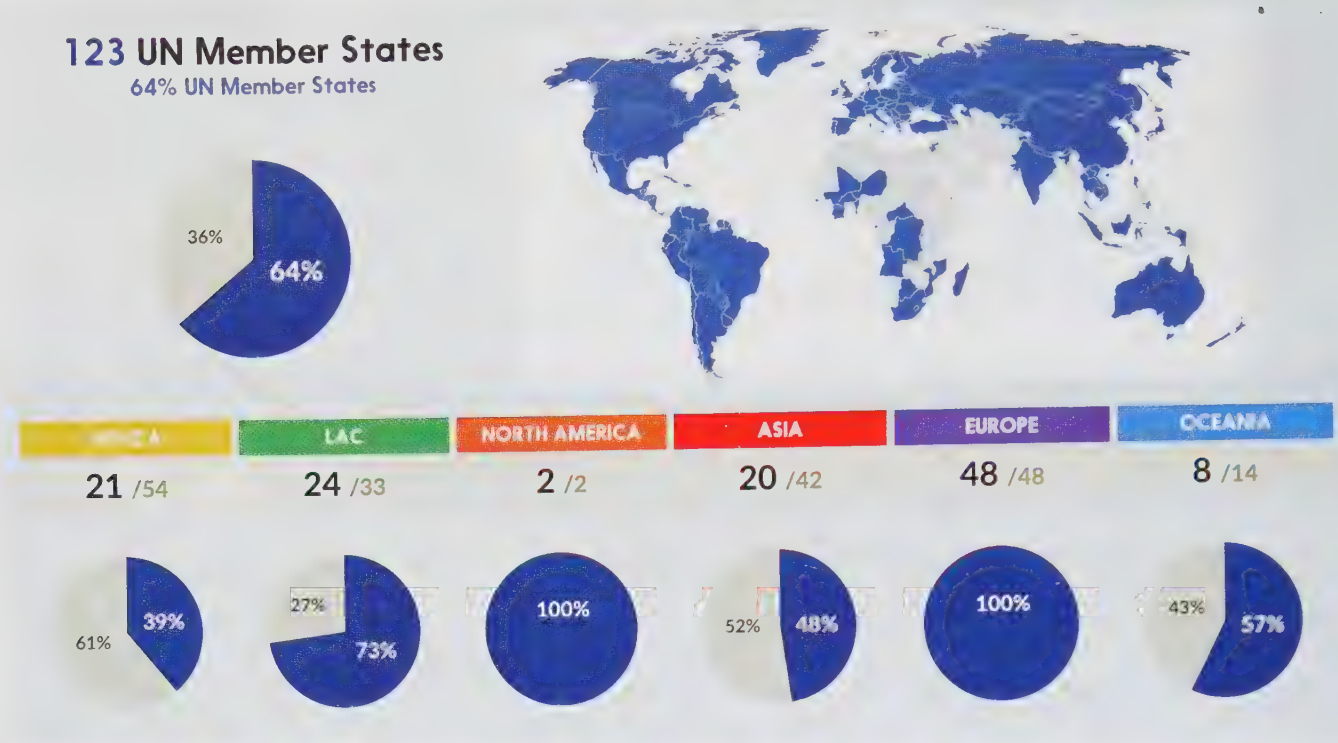


FIGURE 11.3

Percentage of Countries Where Same-Sex Sexual Acts Are Legal, Globally and by Region, 2019

Source: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association: Lucas Ramon Mendos, State-Sponsored Homophobia 2019 (Geneva; ILGA, March 2019). (p. 179).

Evidence of greater acceptance of sexual diversity in Canadian society is clear. Fifty years ago, 63 percent of Canadians believed that homosexuality was always wrong (*Maclean's*, 2002). Such sentiments are now in the minority. A 2019 nationwide survey reported that 64 percent of the population support Canada's decision in 2004 to allow same-sex couples to marry (Canseco, 2019). Another survey conducted by the federal government found 92 percent of Canadians said they would be comfortable if their next door neighbour were gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Akin, 2019).

The trend toward greater acceptance of sexual minorities is observable around the world (Roberts, 2019). Nonetheless, punitive legal environments still exist (see Figure 11.3). Same-sex sexual acts are legal in every country in North America and Europe but continue to be criminalized in most countries in Africa (61 percent) and Asia (52 percent). The penalties in these countries can be severe. In Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Mauritania, conviction is punishable by death.

Canada is one of the most gay-friendly countries in the world (Wilson, 2019), but that doesn't mean all Canadians are tolerant. Some people still want to enforce heteronormativity. Surveys shows that intolerance toward sexual diversity is most common among highly religious and less highly educated Canadians, men, rural residents, immigrants, visible minorities, and non-Indigenous Canadians (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey, 2019: 142).

Without thinking, people may draw on language that denigrates sexual minorities. For example, men on sports teams may insult one another with the label "fag." The expression "that's so gay!" communicates disapproval. Such expressions remind us that heteronormativity can operate without thinking—we don't always attend to the message our words convey. We remain unaware of our biases until we are confronted with them.

A small number of people respond to sexual minorities with outright hate and violence. Canadians who identify as gay or bisexual are three times as likely to be the victim of a violent crime than is a person who identifies as heterosexual (Perreault, 2015). In 2018, there were 173 police-reported hate crimes in Canada targeting sexual orientation, down from 204 incidents the previous year (Moreau, 2020). In contrast, hate crimes

targeting people for their gender identity appear to be on the rise (albeit from a low base), with 14 incidents reported in 2018.

Time for Review

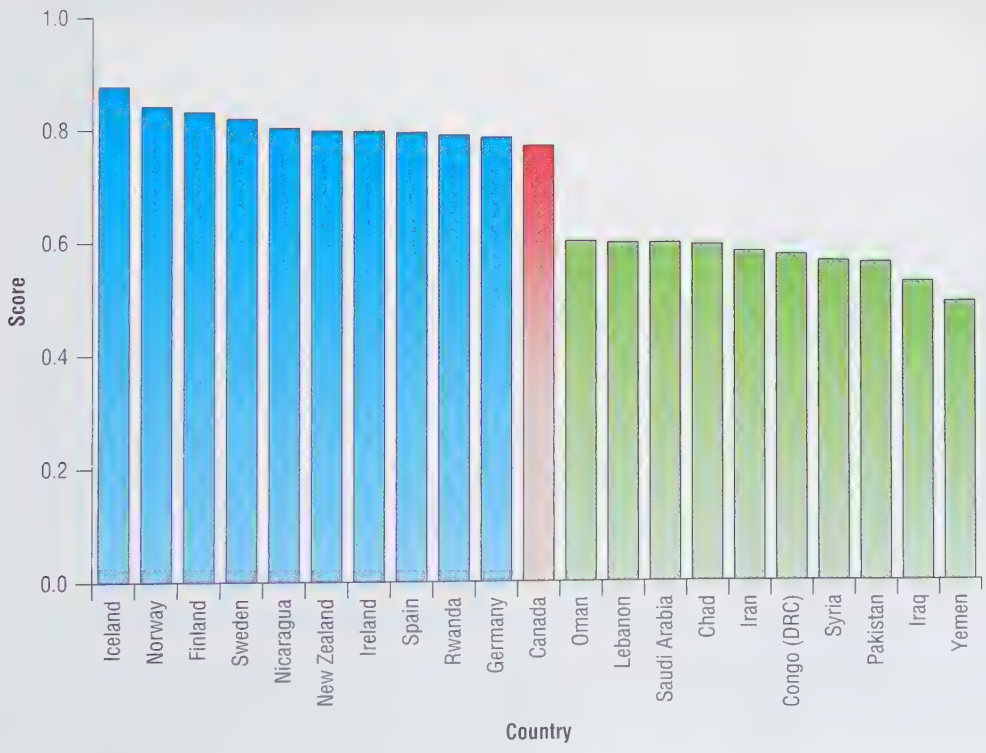
- How do queer theory and feminist theory differ?
- What distinguishes sexual identity, sexual attraction, and sexual behaviour?
- What factors account for changing attitudes toward sexual minorities?

Gender Inequality

How does gender influence the life experiences and life chances of boys and girls, women and men worldwide? One way of comparing countries according to how well women and men are treated is the Global Gender Gap Index. The index takes into account inequality between men and women in terms of participation in the paid labour force, educational attainment, health and life expectancy, and political influence. A score of 1 indicates perfect equality between women and men on these four dimensions, while a score of 0 indicates maximum inequality.

As Figure 11.4 shows, seven of the ten most gender-egalitarian countries in the world are in Europe. Canada ranks 19th. In general, gender inequality is less pronounced in rich countries than in poor countries because gender equality is partly a function of economic development. However, gender equality is also a function of government policy. Thus, in some former communist countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, gender inequality is lower than we would expect given their level of economic development. Meanwhile, in some Islamic-majority countries, gender inequality is higher than we would expect given their level of economic development.

FIGURE 11.4
Global Gender Gap Index, Top 10 and Bottom 10 Countries (plus Canada)



Source: Adapted from the World Economic Forum (2019: Table 1)

The Origins of Gender Inequality

Let us now turn to the question of how gender inequality originated. Contrary to what essentialists say, men have not always enjoyed much more power and authority than women have. Substantial inequality between women and men was socially constructed and has existed for about 6000 years. Three major sociohistorical processes account for the growth of gender inequality: long-distance warfare and conquest, plow agriculture, and the separation of public and private spheres.

LONG-DISTANCE WARFARE AND CONQUEST

The anthropological record suggests that women and men were about equal in status in nomadic, foraging societies, the dominant form of society for 90 percent of human history. Rough gender equality was based on women producing a substantial amount of the band's food, up to 80 percent in some cases (Chapter 14, Families).

The archaeological record from "Old Europe" tells a similar story. Between 7000 and 3500 BCE, men and women enjoyed approximately equal status throughout the region. In fact, the regions' religions gave primacy to fertility and creator goddesses. Kinship was traced through the mother's side of the family. Then, sometime between 4300 and 4200 BCE, all this began to change. Old Europe was invaded by successive waves of warring peoples from the Asiatic and European northeast (the Kurgans) and the deserts to the south (the Semites). Both the Kurgan and Semitic civilizations were based on a steeply hierarchical social structure in which men dominated. Their religions gave primacy to male warrior gods. God became a male who willed that men should rule women. Laws reinforced women's sexual, economic, and political subjugation to men. Traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all embody ideas of male dominance, and they all derive from tribes that conquered Old Europe in the fifth millennium BCE (Eisler, 1987; Lerner, 1986).

PLOW AGRICULTURE

Long-distance warfare and conquest catered to men's strengths, greatly enhancing male power and authority. A similar effect resulted from large-scale farming that used plows harnessed to animals. Plow agriculture originated approximately 5000 years ago. It required that strong adults remain in the fields all day for much of the year. It also reinforced the principle of private ownership of land. Since men were on average stronger than women were, and since women were restricted in their activities by pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing, plow agriculture made men more powerful socially. Thus, men owned land, and ownership was passed from the father to the eldest son (Coontz and Henderson, 1986).

THE SEPARATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES

In the agricultural era, economic production was organized around the household. Men may have worked apart from women in the fields but the fields were still part of the *family* farm. However, during the early phase of industrialization, men's work moved out of the household and into the factory and the office. Most men became wage or salary workers. Some men assumed decision-making roles in economic and political institutions. But while men went public, women who could afford to do so remained in the domestic or private sphere. The idea soon developed that this situation represented a natural division of labour. This idea persisted until the second half of the twentieth century, when a variety of social circumstances, ranging from the introduction of the birth control pill to women's demands for entry into higher education, finally allowed women to enter the public sphere in large numbers.

We thus see that, according to social constructionists, gender inequality derives not from any inherent biological features of men and women but from three main sociohistorical circumstances: the arrival of long-distance warfare and conquest, the development of plow agriculture, and the assignment of women to the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere during the early industrial era.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The twentieth century witnessed growing equality between women and men in many countries. In Canada, the decline of the family farm made children less economically useful and more costly to raise. As a result, women started having fewer children. The industrialization of Canada, and then the growth of the economy's service sector, also increased demand for women in the paid labour force. Such changes made it possible for women to work in the paid labour market. In addition, the women's movement fought and won key battles, extending to women the basic rights that had previously been enjoyed only by men. The women's movement developed in three waves over the course of the twentieth century.

The Women's Movement

The first wave of the women's movement emerged during the late nineteenth century and endured until the early 1920s. Its most important public achievements in Canada were winning the right to vote and the right to be considered persons, and not personal property, under Canadian law. In 1916, women in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan were granted the right to vote in provincial elections. All the other provinces followed suit by 1925 except Québec, which granted women the right to vote only in 1940. These rights were first granted to White women. Women from certain ethnic and racial groups did not receive the franchise until later (Nelson and Robinson, 2002).

The second wave of the women's movement developed in the mid-1960s. Inspired in part by the successes of the civil rights movement in the United States, second-wave feminists argued that women's concerns had been largely disregarded despite the persistence and pervasiveness of gender inequality. Like their counterparts more than 50 years earlier, they held demonstrations, lobbied politicians, and formed women's organizations to advance their cause. Their goals included equal rights with men in education and employment, the elimination of sexual violence, and control over reproduction.

The third wave of the feminist movement began to build in the 1990s, when it was recognized that women were oppressed in different ways and to varying degrees. In particular, working class, non-White women began to resent middle- and upper-class White women portraying themselves as champions of gender equality while hiring women of colour as low-paid nannies and maids and dismissing the experiences of women of different races, abilities, and classes as relevant to the feminist enterprise (Cassidy, Lord, and Mandell, 1998: 26). The feminist movement thus started to splinter. Black and Indigenous feminist scholars began to develop theories that explored how women's lives are rooted in particular historical, colonial settler, and racial experiences (hooks, 1984; Suzack, 2015). Analysts influenced by queer theory argued for paying attention to women with non-heteronormative sexual orientations.

Today, considerable diversity exists in the feminist movement concerning ultimate goals. Three main streams can be distinguished:

1. *Liberal feminism* is the most popular perspective. Its advocates believe that the main sources of women's subordination are learned gender roles and the denial of opportunities to women. Liberal feminists advocate nonsexist methods of socialization and education, more sharing of domestic tasks between women and men, and the extension to women of all the educational, employment, and political rights and privileges that men enjoy.
2. *Socialist feminists* regard women's relationship to the economy as the main source of women's disadvantages. They believe that the traditional nuclear family emerged along with inequalities of wealth and that the economic and sexual oppression of women has its roots in capitalism. Socialist feminists assert that the reforms proposed by liberal feminists are inadequate because they can do little to help working-class women, who are too poor to take advantage of equal educational and work opportunities. Socialist feminists

The second wave of the women's movement started in the mid-1960s. Members of the movement advocated equal rights with men in education and employment, the elimination of sexual violence, and control over their own reproduction.

The Canadian Press/Jonathan Hayward

conclude that only the elimination of private property and the creation of economic equality can bring about an end to the oppression of all women.

3. *Radical feminists* find the reforms proposed by liberals and the revolution proposed by socialists to be inadequate. Patriarchy—male domination and norms justifying that domination—is more deeply rooted than capitalism, say the radical feminists. After all, patriarchy predates capitalism. It is just as evident in self-proclaimed communist societies as in capitalist societies. Radical feminists conclude that the very idea of gender must be changed to bring an end to male domination. Some radical feminists argue that new reproductive technologies, such as in vitro fertilization, are bound to be helpful in this regard because they can break the link between women's bodies and child-bearing (Chapter 14, Families). However, the revolution envisaged by radical feminists reaches beyond the realm of reproduction to include all aspects of male sexual dominance. From their point of view, pornography, sexual harassment, restrictive contraception, sexual assault, incest, sterilization, and physical assault must be eliminated for women to reconstruct their sexuality on their own terms.

The newest strand in the women's movement consists of *postfeminists*, young women who take their equality with men for granted (Everingham, Stevenson, and Warner-Smith, 2007). They think they can have it all—careers and families—if they want; and that if some women choose not to have a career or a family, then that decision is solely theirs. These young women do not see how traditional feminism can help them. Although they are eager to express their empowerment as women, they tend to do so by buying clothes that make them look and feel sexy and allow them to express and take control of their sexuality. Sometimes they call this approach "girl power." Many traditional feminists consider postfeminists naive to think that their actions can help lower the level of gender inequality.

In sum, the women's movement fought for, and won, increased economic, political, and legal rights for women. For many Canadians, the women's movement brought about a fundamental reorientation of thinking in terms of what women could and should do. Thus, despite varying perspectives on how to resolve the issue of gender inequality, the women's movement has achieved much over the past century.

Gender Inequality in the Labour Market

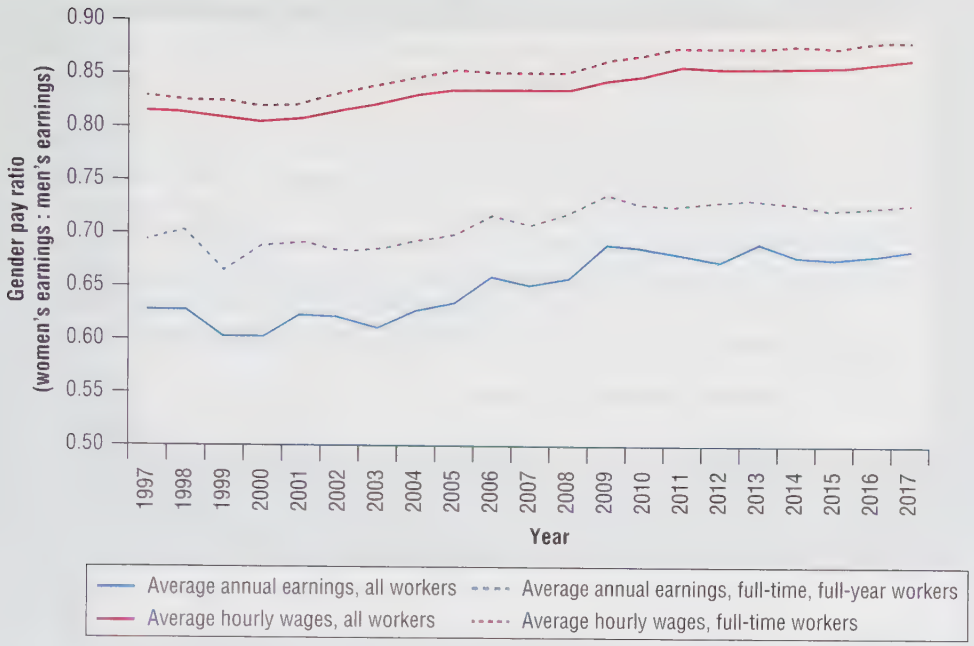
After reading this brief historical overview of the feminist movement, you might be inclined to dismiss gender inequality as ancient history. If so, your conclusion would be hasty. True, women are now almost as likely as men to be employed in the paid labour force. However, men and women report starkly different labour market experiences.

Let us focus on the earnings gap between men and women, one of the most important expressions of gender inequality. Canadian data on the hourly earnings of women and men were first reported in 1967. At that time, the ratio of female to male earnings stood at 58 percent. In the mid-1990s, the ratio passed 70 percent, then hovered around 80 percent until the early 2000s. For the past few years, the ratio has exceeded 85 percent (Moyser, 2019; Pelletier et al., 2019; see Figure 11.5).

Although this trend is welcome, the ratio has not been improving for everyone. For example, the ratio of female to male hourly earnings varies by level of education. For those attaining education beyond a bachelor's degree, women earn 90 cents for every dollar earned by men, but for Canadians with less than a high school diploma, women earn 74 cents for every dollar earned by men (Moyser, 2017). The gender gap is also larger for racialized groups, including Indigenous peoples (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2016).

Sex discrimination is the unequal treatment of men and women in the workplace.

There are two main explanations for the persistence of the ratio of female to male earnings. As we explore these explanations, you will see that **sex discrimination,** defined as the unequal treatment of men and women in the workplace, can operate subtly and in defiance of laws that prohibit it.



Note: Annual earnings refer to annual income from wages, salaries, and commissions before taxes among individuals whose main job was as a paid employee. Employees with zero annual earnings are excluded.

Source: Moyser (2019: 13)

FIGURE 11.5

Gender Pay Ratio Calculated from Average Annual Earnings and Hourly Wages of Employed Women and Men Age 15–16 Years and Older, Canada, 1997 to 2017

OCCUPATIONAL SEX SEGREGATION

One explanation for the gender pay gap is occupational sex segregation, the unequal distribution of workers across and within occupations by gender. **Horizontal occupational sex segregation** captures gender differences *across* occupations. Many people work in jobs that are coded male and female and that are largely filled by members of their own sex (Ridgeway, 2011). Cultural notions of gender essentialism tend to match women to service work (kindergarten and elementary school teachers, dental assistants, dieticians, and so on), whereas men are heavily concentrated in manual labour (miners, plumbers, auto mechanics, firefighters, and the like). Crossover—men working as dental assistants, women as plumbers—is rare.

Horizontal occupational sex segregation is the unequal sex distribution of workers across occupations.

People commonly assume that work done by women involves fewer skills and is therefore less valuable than work done by men. The assumption is questionable. It is more plausible that women tend to earn less than men do largely because people often undervalue the skills involved in women's work (Lips, 2013; Sayers, 2012). Thus, in Canada, truck drivers (97 percent of whom are men) earn a median annual wage of $45 417, whereas kindergarten teachers (97 percent of whom are women) earn a median annual wage of $25 334 (Lambert and McInturff, 2016). Does it take less training and skill to teach a young child the basics of counting and cooperation than it takes to manoeuvre a large vehicle from one location to another? Is socializing youngsters less important than driving a truck? As this example suggests, we sometimes apply arbitrary standards to reward different occupational roles. In our society, these standards systematically undervalue the kind of skills needed for jobs where women are concentrated.

Vertical occupational sex segregation describes *within*-occupation sex segregation, with women clustered at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy and men disproportionately at the top. Women are rarely CEOs, top corporate officers, presidents, and directors of major firms and institutions. Among the top 1 percent of Canadian earners, fewer than one in four are women (Fortin, 2019). The glass ceiling is intact. More than 40 years of research

Vertical occupational sex segregation is the unequal sex distribution of workers within occupations.

on the subject finds that Canadian women are less likely to be promoted than men are. Moreover, if they are promoted, they are likely to receive smaller wage increases than men with similar jobs and worker characteristics enjoy (Javdani and McGee, 2019).

Earlier we attributed the glass ceiling partly to most women's non-assertive and consensus-seeking interaction style relative to men. People in leadership positions are expected to be direct, decisive, and authoritative. These behaviours are culturally coded as male. Thus women who aspire to leadership positions are in a double bind. On one hand, asserting authority over others means violating accepted gender roles for women. On the other hand, if a woman displays emotional warmth or empathy, she will be perceived as weak. The implicitly gendered image of the corporate leader is such that a male candidate is consistently preferred over a female candidate. These biases repeat over multiple settings and accumulate over careers, creating and re-creating the gendered structure of work (Ridgeway, 2011).

THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY

The **motherhood penalty** is the tendency for women who become mothers to experience a drop in earnings.

The **fatherhood premium** is the tendency for men who become fathers to experience a boost in earnings.

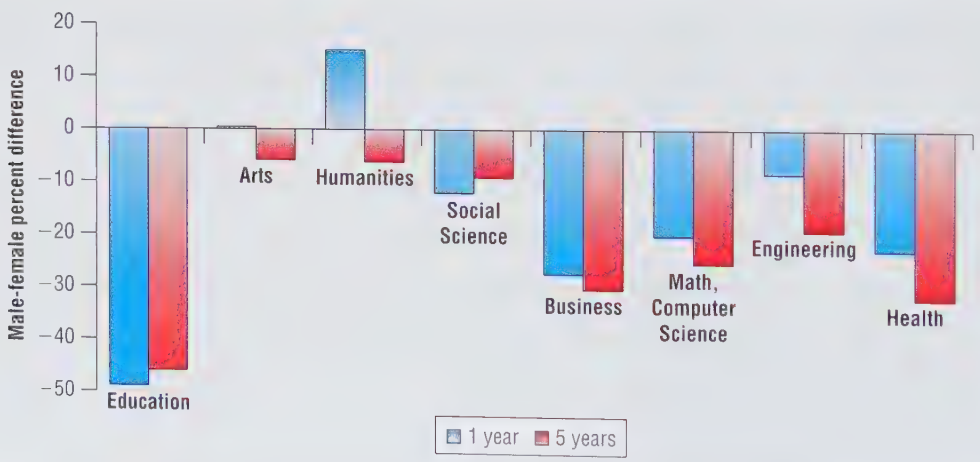
On entering the labour market as young adults, gender differences in earnings are significant, and they grow in almost all fields over time (see Figure 11.6). However, when women bear children, the gender gap widens a lot. Universally, becoming a mother reduces women's earnings, a phenomenon called the **motherhood penalty** (Budig and England, 2001; Zhang, 2009). The gap also widens because men who become fathers generally experience a boost in earnings, which some have called the **fatherhood premium** (Cooke and Fuller, 2018; Killewald, 2012). In other words, becoming a parent has opposite effects on the earnings of men and women.

Why does motherhood negatively affect women's earnings? Because women shoulder greater responsibility for childrearing relative to men, couples tend to undergo a shift toward a more traditional gendered division of labour after they become parents. For example, women are more likely than men to leave the paid labour force temporarily or permanently after childbirth (Budig and England, 2001). Even when men take parental leave, most take no more than a month off paid employment. In contrast, most women wait at least a year after childbirth before returning to paid employment (Beaupré and Cloutier, 2007).

In Canada, women who give birth are entitled to maternity and parental leave from their job to a maximum of 78 weeks. When the leave is over, Canadian labour law stipulates women must be reinstated to their former position or given a comparable position with the

FIGURE 11.6

Male-Female Percentage Difference in Earnings in First and Fifth Years of Employment by Field, Canada



Note: Population = all college and university graduates from publicly funded Canadian postsecondary education institutions from 2010 through 2014. Measure = annual employment earnings, 2011 and 2015.

Source: Finnie, R., Miyairi, M., Dubois, M., Bonen, T., and Amery, B. 2019. How Much Do They Make? New evidence on the early career earnings of Canadian post-secondary education graduates by credential and field of study (Ottawa: Education Policy Research Initiative and Labour Market Information Council): 50.

same wages and benefits. Nonetheless, when women return to paid employment following childbirth, their preferences may no longer match their previous job (Moyser, 2019). Long work hours or rigid schedules may become undesirable, prompting women to look for a work arrangement more accommodating to caregiving demands (Beaujot and Ravanera, 2009; Dill and Frech, 2019). On the job market, mothers become willing to trade wages for a flexible work environment. Women who change employers when they return to the labour market after childbirth experience a larger drop in earnings than do women who stay in the same position when they return to work after childbirth (Zhang, 2010).

The motherhood penalty isn't solely the result of mothers' changing labour force preferences. In addition, employers treat mothers differently. Mothers are often viewed as less productive and motivated than other workers are, although no research finds such a productivity difference (Kmec, 2011; Knoll, 2020). An experiment illustrated the bias against hiring mothers (Correll et al., 2007). Over an 18-month period, researchers responded to job ads for entry and mid-level marketing or business positions. For each job advertised, the researchers sent résumés and cover letters from a pair of fictitious, equally qualified, same-gender applicants (both male or both female). The only difference between the two applicants was parental status, which was counterbalanced across members of the pair. At the end of the study, the researchers compared callbacks (messages by phone or email from employers inviting the applicant to an interview). The bias against mothers was striking, with childless women receiving twice as many callbacks as equally qualified mothers received. Less support was found for the fatherhood premium, but fathers were slightly more likely to receive a callback than childless men were.

Recent Canadian research shows that discrimination against mothers by employers accounts for more of the motherhood penalty than does mother's changing work preferences when she returns from parental leave (Fuller, 2018). As you will learn in the next section, bias against hiring women operates in other ways too.

GENDER BIAS IN HIRING DECISIONS

In 2017, Amazon stopped work on a computer program that used machine learning to review the résumés of job applicants and identify promising recruits. Why? Because the program taught itself to prefer male over female candidates.

Today, predictive technologies are routinely deployed in the job market. For example, Plum, founded by a Canadian woman in 2012, uses artificial intelligence to analyze scores on personality tests to match job applicants to positions. Knockri, based in Toronto, employs artificial intelligence to screen job candidates through facial analysis of video interviews. Knockri claims its algorithm is blind to skin colour, race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, or sexual orientation. However, a study that analyzed the practices of 18 recruitment firms that use algorithmic pre-employment assessments (including Plum and Knockri) came to a different conclusion. Despite the good intentions of firms to eliminate bias, the researchers found that the methods firms used to validate predictive models for bias were inconsistent and questionable (Raghanvan et al., 2020). They concluded that the field is too young to know whether gender bias exists in recruitment algorithms.

What we do know is that the gender wage gap is not based on inherent differences between men and women. It is the result of social circumstances. This fact implies that we can reduce the gender wage gap if we choose to. Accordingly, we next discuss policies that can increase equality between women and men.

ELIMINATING THE GENDER GAP IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Two main policy initiatives will probably be required to bridge the gender gap: the development of a better child-care system and of a policy of "equal pay for work of equal value." Let us consider each of these issues in turn.

Child Care

High-quality, government-subsidized, affordable child care is widely available in most Western European countries but not in Canada outside of Québec (Chapter 14, Families).

Canada's child-care programs are a patchwork that has been chronically underfunded. Currently, there are only enough regulated day care spaces for one in every four children under the age of six in Canada (Anderson, Ballantyne, and Friendly, 2016). As a result, many Canadian women with young children are either unable to work outside the home or able to work outside the home only on a part-time basis.

A universal system of day care was proposed in Canada as early as 1970, but little has been accomplished at the federal level or in most provinces and territories. Québec is an exception. In 1997, it introduced a comprehensive family policy that attempts to integrate family benefits, paid parental leave, child care, and kindergarten. Its child-care component heralded universally available, affordable child care. As of this writing, fees range from $8.05 to $21.95 per day, depending on family income. Once women had access to child care, women's rate of labour market participation and average annual income began to climb and the gender wage gap narrowed (Fortin, 2017; Stalker and Ornstein, 2013).

Various federal governments have pledged to fix Canada's child-care problems, but today Canadians remain without a national child-care strategy. Consequently, the cost of child care ranges widely across the country. Because Québec subsidizes the cost of child care, parents pay far less in that province than they do elsewhere. Currently, the average monthly cost to place a child in day care in Montréal can be as low as $121. It is nearly 15 times that in Toronto (Macdonald and Friendly, 2019).

Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

Equal pay for work of equal value refers to the equal dollar value of different jobs. The value of work is established in gender-neutral terms by comparing jobs in terms of the education and experience needed to do them and the stress, responsibility, and working conditions associated with them.

In 1985, Manitoba became the first Canadian province to implement **equal pay for work of equal value** (or "pay equity") in the public service. Pay equity in the public sector is required by law in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island and for the public and certain private sectors in Québec and Ontario (Pay Equity Office, 2018). However, in the private sector, provisions vary widely, enforcement mechanisms are weak, and employers have found ways to argue that unequal wages do not signify discrimination based on sex.

In light of the meagre advances in Canadian public policy that we have outlined, it is easy to understand why the experience of women and men in the labour market is so different. It is probably less evident that continued gender inequality encourages male violence against women, an issue to which we now turn.

Violence against Women

On April 23, 2018, on a sunny afternoon in Toronto, a white van swerved without warning from the street onto a busy sidewalk. As people shrieked and ran, the driver began mowing people down. When the rampage came to an end seven minutes later, 10 people lay dead and another 16 were badly injured.

In a police interview conducted shortly afterward, the driver of the van, an angry young man named Alek, boasted that this was an act of retribution. Alek proudly identified himself as a member of the incel community. Incel, slang for *involuntary celibate*, is a fringe hate group of men who believe women are inferior and owe them sex. Having been rebuffed by women his entire life, Alek felt justified taking his rage out on others, although not all his victims turned out to be women.

The van attack unnerved the public. The anger expressed by the van driver represented a level of hate toward women that few had previously encountered. Yet, on average, a woman or girl is killed in this country every three days (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2019). Almost all are killed by men.

Alek's hatred was directed toward all women. However, women are not equally at risk for violence, nor do all women experience violence in the same way. Violence against women must be seen through the lens of intersectionality. Consider the case of Cindy Gladue. In 2011, she bled to death in a bathtub after a night of rough sex with a truck driver, Bradley Barton. The next morning, Barton fled the scene. Police tracked him down and charged him with murder. Yet in court, it was Cindy who was on trial. The lawyers repeatedly referred to

Cindy's "native" status and risky lifestyle as a sex worker. Even the prosecutors dehumanized Cindy. Without seeking the family's consent, the prosecution presented her preserved vagina, which had been removed post-mortem, as evidence in court (di Manno, 2015). Cindy's treatment in court reinforced the stereotype that Indigenous women are worthless and disposable. It became impossible for the jury to see Cindy as a victim. Barton was acquitted, although at the time of this writing he faces a new trial for manslaughter ordered by the Supreme Court of Canada.

You might think that this case represents an isolated incident, but that is hardly the case. The homicide rate for Indigenous women is more than six times the rate for non-Indigenous women in Canada (Roy and Marcellus, 2019). Indigenous women are three times as likely to experience intimate partner abuse as non-Indigenous women (Boyce, 2016). Yet when incidents of violence are reported by Indigenous women and charges are laid, there is a higher rate of dismissed charges or not guilty outcomes than for non-Indigenous Canadians (Scrim, 2010). While violence against women is always abhorrent, the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada and their unequal access to justice stand out as particularly egregious.

Cindy Gladue's story also tells us that violence against women won't be solved if we focus on the crime itself. The criminal justice system and public attitudes play a part in sustaining unacceptable acts of violence against women. As we turn our attention to sexual harassment, sexual violence, and intimate partner abuse in the following sections, take careful note of the power imbalances underlying them.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Canada Labour Code defines **sexual harassment** as "any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee, or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion" (Government of Canada, 2019a). Sexual harassment in Canadian workplaces is common, with about half of men and women indicating they have observed sexually inappropriate behaviour at their workplace in the past year (Cotter and Savage, 2019). The same survey, however, found women were more likely than men (29 percent versus 17 percent) to have personally experienced sexual harassment at work.

Sexual harassment is any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee, or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by an employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or any opportunity for training or promotion.

Research shows that relatively powerless women are most likely to be sexually harassed. Thus, women who are young, unmarried, and employed in non-professional jobs are most likely to become objects of sexual harassment, particularly if they are temporary workers, if the ratio of men to women in the workplace is high, and if the culture of the workplace tolerates sexual harassment (Welsh, 1999). Sexual harassment is rampant in the Canadian military, the RCMP, and correctional facilities. In these hyper-masculine workplaces, the culture has proved resistant to change. Women who experience sexual harassment in these workplaces often feel re-victimized when they file a complaint.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Serious acts of sexual aggression committed by men against women are common. A nationwide survey of 43 000 Canadians in 2018 revealed that approximately one in three women over the age of 14 experienced some form of unwanted sexual behaviour in the past twelve months (Cotter and Savage, 2019). Worldwide, 7.2 percent of women over the age of 14 reported that they have been sexually assaulted by someone other than an intimate partner at least once in their lives (Abrahams et al., 2014).

Are sexual assaults more common today than in the past? There are no nationally representative Canadian surveys that can address this question, but we are able to compare two studies that focus on sexual victimization among postsecondary students. In the 1990s, researchers found that 45.1 percent of female Canadian postsecondary students had been sexually victimized (DeKeseredy and Kelly, 1993). A more recent study reported somewhat higher estimates: 58.7 percent of first-year female students at three Canadian universities said they had experienced sexual victimization (Senn et al., 2014). Whether this represents

a real increase or a greater willingness on the part of university students to disclose sexual assault is unknown, but postsecondary institutions are increasingly aware of the problem of sexual violence on their campuses (see Box 11.2).

Events of the past few years have generated new visibility around the issue of sexual harassment and assault. Although its origins trace back more than a decade, the #MeToo movement gained momentum in the fall of 2017 after a bombshell story appeared in the *New York Times* (Kantor and Twohey, 2017). The article not only detailed decades of sexual misconduct by movie mogul Harvey Weinstein but also revealed his company's repeated pattern of paying off his accusers and binding them to non-disclosure agreements. Less than two weeks later, actor Alyssa Milano tweeted a request to her followers: "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." In the weeks that followed, millions of women worldwide took to social media to disclose their experiences of sexual misconduct.

The effects were immediate and world-shattering. In quick succession, powerful men in the realms of politics, sports, entertainment, and science were forced to step down. Some were criminally charged. In Canada, the #MeToo movement triggered a spike in reporting of sexual harassment and assault to the police (Rotenberg and Cotter, 2018).

However, some argue that a backlash has emerged in recent years. Thus, after a long awaited trial, Harvey Weinstein was convicted of felony sex crime and rape in the spring of 2020, but acquitted of the most serious charges, including predatory sexual assault.

Others have identified the unintended consequences of the #MeToo movement. One survey conducted in early 2019 found that men were increasingly concerned about being unfairly accused of sexual misconduct (Bower, 2019). As a result, about one in five men expressed a reduced willingness to hire women. They were also less likely to

BOX 11.2 Social Policy

POLICIES AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Every Labour Day weekend, first-year university and college students flock to campuses across the country to take part in Frosh week. It's a way to welcome and orient first-year students to university and college life with live music, organized social gatherings, tours, and rallies—all intended to instill a sense of school spirit in the newcomers.

A few years ago, the yearly event came under public scrutiny. Videos posted to social media sites showed first-year male and female students yelling out chants, such as: "We like them YOUNG: Y is for your sister; O is for oh-so-tight; U is for underage; N is for no consent; G is for grab that ass."

Apparently, the chants were nothing new. They had been recited for years on both campuses and indeed at universities and colleges across Canada. When the videos went viral, however, these institutions were forced to address a long-standing problem. At issue was whether postsecondary institutions were doing enough to prevent a "rape culture" from taking hold on campus. A rape culture is said to exist in any environment where sexual violence is normalized, excused, and even condoned. For example, people who believe that men are naturally aggressive and that women are "just asking for it" foster an environment that is conducive to rape.

Postsecondary institutions responded to the crisis in a number of ways. In Québec, provincial legislation required universities to establish policies to prevent sexual assault on campus (Ricci and Bergeron, 2019). McGill University introduced a new online course on sexual violence awareness and prevention that is mandatory for students, staff, and faculty (Sucar, 2019). In 2018, Ontario commissioned a province-wide survey of students' experiences of sexual violence, perceptions of consent, and satisfaction with institutional response to sexual violence. Findings from this and similar surveys suggest there is significant room for improvement. No more than 10 percent of incidents of sexual violence are reported to university authorities (Bergeron et al., 2016). Of those students who do report, nearly one-half say they were dissatisfied with the institution's response (CCI Research, 2019l).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Are you aware of policies to prevent sexual violence at your institution? If so, do you think they are sufficient?
2. What further measures do you think colleges and universities should take to address the issue of sexual violence on Canadian campuses?

invite their female colleagues to work-related social events or have one-on-one meetings with them.

The need for reform of the criminal justice system is compelling. Of the 93 501 sexual assaults reported to the police in Canada between 2009 and 2014, fewer than half resulted in criminal charges (Rotenberg, 2017). Moreover, fewer than half of criminally charged cases ended up in court. In fact, attrition occurred all along the process so that fewer than 5 percent of criminally reported sexual assaults resulted in a prison sentence. But the situation is even worse because far more women experience sexual assault than file a police report. When all sexual assaults are taken into account, experts say that less than 1 percent result in jail time.

Sundry Photography/Shutterstock

The Time's Up movement followed in the footsteps of the #MeToo movement, but with one major difference. Whereas #MeToo is a movement to create awareness and to provide people with an outlet to tell their stories, Time's Up is an action-based movement focused on legislation to change sexual harassment and assault in the workplace.

Four factors help to explain why the attrition rate for sexual assault is so high (Bruckert and Law, 2018). First, one in five sexual assault complaints reported to police are categorized as unfounded (Doolittle, 2017). If the complainant doesn't match police expectation for what a rape victim should look like or if police think the chances of conviction are low, they will not investigate the incident further. Second, defence attorneys routinely raise doubts about the victim's credibility and her status as victim that are deemed likely to secure a favourable outcome for their client. A third factor is bias on the part of the judge or jury. Most judges keep their biases hidden, but some judges can't help themselves. During a sexual assault trial in 2014, an Alberta judge repeatedly asked a 19-year-old woman on the stand why she couldn't just keep her knees together during the attack. He later acquitted the defendant. Finally, even when a criminal conviction for sexual assault is obtained, incarceration is not guaranteed. Indeed, sentences tend to include jail time more often for those convicted of physical assault than is the case for those convicted of sexual assault.

Of course, most Canadian men do not condone sexual assault against women. Nonetheless, most cultures, including ours, continue to legitimize male dominance, making it seem valid or proper. For example, pornography, jokes about "dumb blondes," and leering at women might seem harmless. At a subtler sociological level, these types of activities support the assertion that women should submit to men. Research shows that these types of frequent and routine reinforcements of male superiority make it more likely that some men will consider it their right to assault women physically or sexually if the opportunity to do so exists or can be created (Ryan and Kanjorski, 1998).

INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE

About 30 percent of police-reported violent crime in Canada involves intimate partner violence, and 80 percent of victims of intimate partner violence are women (Statistics Canada, 2019l). Women are far more likely than are men to experience severe physical aggression, such as being beaten, choked, strangled, sexually assaulted, and killed (Stewart, MacMillan, and Wathen, 2013).

There are three main types of intimate partner violence (Johnson, 2008; Johnson and Ferraro, 2000):

1. *Common couple violence* occurs when partners have an argument, and one partner lashes out physically at the other. For a couple that engages in this type of violence, violent acts are unlikely to occur often, escalate over time, or be severe. Both partners are about equally likely to engage in common couple violence, regardless of gender.
2. *Intimate terrorism* is part of a general desire of one partner to control the other. Where one partner engages in intimate terrorism, violent acts are likely to occur often, escalate over time, and be severe. Among heterosexual couples, the aggressor is usually the man.
3. *Violent resistance* is the third main type of domestic violence. Among heterosexual couples, violent resistance typically involves a woman violently defending herself against a man who has engaged in intimate terrorism.

For heterosexual couples, intimate partner violence is positively associated with the level of gender inequality in the family. It is also more common in families where men believe that male domination is justified and among couples who had witnessed their mothers being abused and who had themselves been abused when they were children (Franklin and Kercher, 2012; Kaufman-Parks et al., 2018; Li, Zhao, and Yu, 2020; Stewart, MacMillan, and Wathen, 2013). In short, the incidence of domestic violence is highest where a big power imbalance exists between men and women, where norms justify the male domination of women, and where early socialization experiences predispose men to behave aggressively toward women.

What is true for families is also true for entire countries: the higher the level of gender inequality, the greater the risk to women's physical security. Specifically, across 137 countries for which relevant data are available, the greater the gap between women's and men's levels of education, income, and political influence, the more entrenched the culture of male domination, the more men feel it is their right to dominate women physically, and the higher the rate of female homicide, rape, and domestic violence (Brym, 2014c). Gender inequality, we conclude, is not just a question of justice but a matter of safety.

Time for Review

- What three sociohistorical forces led to the widening of gender inequality?
- What were the main achievements of each of the three waves of feminism?
- How do occupational sex segregation and the motherhood penalty help to explain the gender wage gap?
- How is gender inequality linked to violence against women?

Summary

1. What does it mean to treat sex and gender as binary categories?

Sex refers to certain genetic, anatomical, and hormonal features of a person, while *gender* refers to the socially constructed expectations associated with a given sex category. Although sex and gender are often treated as binary categories, variation exists. Intersex babies demonstrate that an either/or categorization of sex is too rigid. Similarly, many cultures accept that there are more genders than simply male and female. When people look beyond the gender binary, sex and gender are each understood to lie on a continuum, and there is no necessary relation between them.

2. What are the main social forces that influence people to develop conventional gender roles?

Various agents of socialization channel people into performing culturally approved gender roles. The family, the school, and mass media are among the most important of

these agents of socialization. The lessons that children learn about gender roles are lifelong, influencing the careers they ultimately choose and their interaction styles at work.

3. **What accounts for changing attitudes toward sexual minorities?**
   Although heteronormativity persists, growing acceptance of sexual minorities is the result of (a) scientific research that has normalized diverse expressions of sexuality and (b) the efforts of sexual minorities to change public attitudes. Despite its reputation as a safe place for sexual minorities, Canada still has some way to go to ensure that sexual minorities are free from ridicule and violence.

4. **How does gender influence men's and women's experiences in the labour market?**
   The gender gap in earnings derives from women's concentration in low-wage occupations and industries, the undervaluation of work typically done by women, and outright discrimination in promotion and hiring practices. Among the major reforms that could help eliminate the gender gap in earnings and reduce the level and expression of gender inequality are the development of an affordable, accessible system of high-quality day care and the remuneration of men and women on the basis of their work's actual value.

5. **What explains violence against women?**
   Violence against women is rooted in gender inequality. Thus, where women and men are more equal socially and norms justify gender equality, the rate of aggression against women is lower. Men's aggression against women, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and intimate partner abuse, is encouraged by a lesson most of us still learn—that it is natural and right for men to dominate women. Daily patterns of gender domination, viewed as legitimate by most people, are built into our culture and our institutions.

12 The Body and Health: Disability, Aging, and Death

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Recognize that the way bodies look has social causes and social consequences.
- Illustrate how individuals modify their bodily appearance to express identity and difference.
- Identify how health and illness are socially patterned.
- Analyze the influence of medicine and medical doctors over bodily processes.
- Compare definitions of disability and responses to disability over time and place.
- Evaluate the potential for population aging to reduce discriminatory attitudes and affect power imbalances between young and old.
- Recognize how death and dying are influenced by sociological processes.

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Thinking About the Human Body Sociologically

Have you ever thought about the ways in which people are increasingly able to do things in this world without a physical presence? Take online courses. You don't need to get dressed, wait for a bus, or look for a seat in the classroom. Instead, by logging on to a computer, you can listen to the instructor, participate in class discussion, and write an exam, all from the comfort of your home.

Or think about modern warfare. Instead of a traditional battlefield where combatants gather to fight face to face, war in the twenty-first century does not require enemies to be physically present in the same place. Remotely piloted aerial vehicles, or drones, are at the forefront of robotic warfare (Bhatt, 2012). The use of drones has escalated dramatically because of their precision and their ability to insulate pilots from harm (Gusterson, 2016). While China, Russia, the United States, and Israel compete for supremacy in drone technology, many more countries are quietly purchasing military drones (Pickrell, 2019).

Imagine soldiers, dressed in military uniform, arriving to work at a set of bunkers in a nearby army base. Seated in ergonomic chairs and surrounded by computer screens in dimly lit, air-conditioned rooms, these soldiers operate drones that can be thousands of kilometres away. Their mission is to conduct surveillance on high-value targets, provide protection and reconnaissance to fellow soldiers on the ground, and rain missiles on enemies (Mayer, 2015).

You might think that sociologists of the body would have little interest in studying virtual activities such as drone warfare. After all, it is the *technological* wizardry that gets all the attention in the mass media. Yet in three ways, drone warfare piques the interest of sociologists who think about the human body.

First, sociologists are interested in how the human body is marked so it can be socially regulated. To make this point, a sociologist might ask, if bodies are truly irrelevant in drone warfare, why do the soldiers who operate the drones wear uniforms? Outsiders cannot see them in their military garb. For all it matters, the soldiers operating the drones could be sitting in their underwear or in party clothes.

A sociological response to this question is that social institutions always make demands on bodily appearance as a means of exerting social control. An army uniform indicates membership in an organization and allegiance to a state. It makes the wearers' status visible to themselves and others, serving as a constant reminder that they belong to certain collectivities and identify with their goals. Uniforms also give legitimacy to certain activities, sanctioning behaviour that otherwise would be problematic—such as killing people. In short, to wear a military uniform is to confirm an identity as a highly trained and fully compliant soldier who behaves in expected ways.

Drone operators must be skilled in reading and interpreting the bodies they observe. Emotional expression, gesture, stance, and dress provide clues to a person's status and purpose. By correctly interpreting the bodily appearance and behaviour of potential targets, drone operators can distinguish enemy combatants from civilians, glean information on foes, and take action against them. Sociologists also study human bodies—not to destroy them, of course, but to analyze them as social products, entities that bear the imprint of society. For instance, although height and weight are often taken for granted as natural or biological features, they are qualities influenced by social conditions and norms.

Bodies are also vehicles for expressing individuality. Although people have altered their bodies in various ways throughout history, increasingly a tendency exists for the body

to be seen as a "project" that people shape to achieve a unique identity (Shilling, 2013). Some people spend time in the gym, cultivating a muscular appearance. Others dye their hair to hide signs of aging. Still others use piercings, tattoos, and other forms of body modification to create bodies intended to be admired as pieces of art. The body can also be marked unintentionally, as occurs when illness and disability change someone's appearance or impose bodily restrictions. Regardless of circumstance, embedded in the idea that our bodies reflect both our selves and our society is a sociological principle that is the main lesson of this chapter. The human body is more than a wonder of biology. It is also a sociological wonder insofar as it is central to constructing culture, personhood, and identity (Fox, 2012; Turner, 1996).

Embodiment refers to the physical and mental experience of existence.

A second reason sociologists of the human body are drawn to studying drone warfare relates to the issue of embodiment. **Embodiment** refers to the physical and mental experience of existence. Said differently, a body is not just something that we have; it is also something that we are. We can better understand the nature of embodiment by looking at a common misconception about the effects of drone warfare on soldiers. Many people assume that because the soldiers operating drones are fighting a virtual war, their experiences lack the same intensity as those of soldiers who are physically present in battle. Therefore, it is common for drone operators to be mocked by other soldiers, derided as "cubicle warriors" or worse (Gregory, 2011).

Do drone operators merit such a dismissive label? Their bodies suggest otherwise. Even though they are not physically present in the battlefield, drone operators experience the same adrenaline rush as do soldiers engaged physically in battle. When drone operators launch a missile from the safety of their bunkers, their bodies sweat, their hearts race, and their breathing becomes shallow and rapid. These bodily signs, characteristic of the fight-or-flight response, cannot be suppressed despite the absence of any physical threat to the soldier and the distance that separates the soldier from the target. The physical response tells us that the experience of killing, whether in person or not, is always "embodied." The body and the mind are not easily separated. Even virtual war has a material reality (Holmqvist, 2013).

Not only does drone warfare elicit a physical response, it may also have mental health consequences. A common mental health diagnosis among soldiers is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which involves the unwanted and repeated reliving of traumatic events through nightmares and flashbacks. Research shows that drone operators experience PTSD as frequently, or perhaps even more frequently, than do soldiers in the battlefield. One reason for their PTSD is that drone operators can see high-resolution images of death and destruction that are often not visible to soldiers on the battlefield (Gusterson, 2016).

Paying attention to embodiment also alerts sociologists to the ways in which we often ignore what it means for people to inhabit bodies that are ill, aged, or disabled. Hospital personnel often reduce people to their medical problem, referring to "the lymphoma in Room 203" or "the geriatric case down the hall." Such administrative categories can make it difficult to see beyond the label. In contrast, sociologists seek to understand the experience of being ill, elderly, or disabled. As we will see, taking embodiment into account can move us past the tyranny of stereotypes and into the realm of subjective experience.

There is a third way in which drone warfare captures the interest of those who think about the body sociologically. Today, possibilities exist for shaping bodies that would have been seen as science fiction just a few decades ago. For example, people with spinal cord injuries are beginning to benefit from brain interface devices. When implanted in the brain, these devices wirelessly transmit information to micro-electric stimulators in the body, bypassing the spinal cord to produce the desired movement. Breakthroughs have also been made in the treatment of diabetes. Beeper-sized computer devices track blood sugar level and deliver insulin continuously via a small pump under the skin, eliminating the routine of painful finger pricks and better mimicking normal pancreatic processes. Moreover, these devices can be controlled by smartphones, and the gathered information can be relayed to health-care practitioners.

A **cyborg** is an entity that embodies elements both living and dead, human and machine, natural and unnatural.

A **cyborg** (short for cybernetic organism) is an entity that embodies elements living and dead, human and machine, natural and unnatural (Haraway, 1991). We have entered

the age of cyborgs, and their existence raises the question of exactly what human bodies are and what they might become (Sandel, 2007; Shilling, 2013). For example, should there be limits on which technologies are employed to change the human body? Should we use technology merely to improve the lives of people with disabilities so their experiences are comparable to those who are not living with a disability? Or should we strive to enhance all human performance, enabling us to acquire senses and capacities far beyond our present capabilities?

In this chapter, we discover the ways in which having and being a body lie at the core of all social engagement. Bodies are socially regulated and marked, they are the surface on which we convey social status and identity, they are the basis for our social existence in the world, and they are the source of considerable debate as technology erases the boundaries between human and machine. These themes are woven throughout this chapter as we consider the ways in which bodily appearance, disease, disability, aging, and death have social significance.

Time for Review

- Why do uniforms help to produce desired behaviour?
- What are the three ways in which drone warfare piques the interest of sociologists interested in the human body?
- Why is it important to understand the implications of embodiment?
- How do cyborgs blur the boundaries between human and machine?

Society and the Human Body

The Body and Social Status

The human body means different things and has a variety of consequences in different cultures and historical periods and for various categories of people. For example, a person's height, weight, and attractiveness may seem to be facts of nature. However, the standards by which we define a "normal" or "desirable" body vary historically. Moreover, because of the social value that is placed on a person's height, weight, and perceived attractiveness, these bodily features influence income, health, likelihood of getting married, and much else. Let's explore in detail the relationship between body characteristics and social status.

HEIGHT

In an experiment, four people of the same height and roughly similar appearance were introduced to a group of students. The first person was introduced as another undergraduate, the second as a graduate student, the third as an assistant professor, and the fourth as a full professor. Members of the group were asked to rank the four people in terms of their height. Despite the fact that all four were of equal stature, the students estimated that the full professor was the tallest, the assistant professor next tallest, then the graduate student, and finally the undergraduate. Apparently believing that physical stature reflects social stature, the students correlated social status with height (Short Guys Finish Last, 1995–96).

Is this perception accurate? Do tall people really tend to enjoy high social status? And why are some people tall in the first place? We can begin to answer these questions by first acknowledging that genes are an important determinant of any particular individual's height. However, the great majority of human *populations* are almost exactly the same genetically. A complex set of *social* factors determines the average height of most populations, whether the population consists of members of a country, a class, a racial or ethnic group, and so on. Moreover, a complex set of social consequences flow from differences in height.

FIGURE 12.1
A Flow Diagram of Determinants and Consequences of Stature in Human Populations

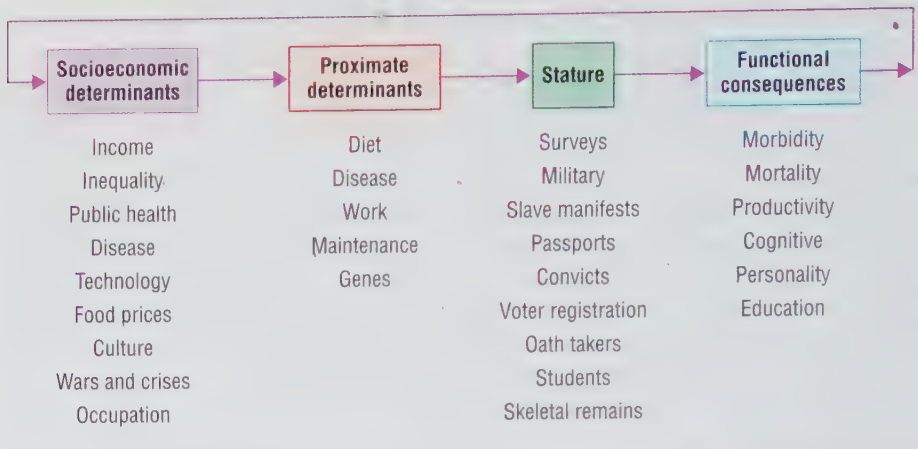

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Figure 12.1 shows some of the main social causes and consequences of stature. For purposes of illustration, consider just the impact of income on height. When incomes rise in a population, parents can better afford to feed their children a higher-quality diet (especially one rich in protein), helping their offspring to grow taller in adulthood. Over successive generations, average height in the population gradually increases. Thus, Danish men were on average nearly 13 centimetres (five inches) taller in 1980 than in 1860 (Hatton and Bray, 2010). Japanese men were on average five centimetres (two inches) taller at the end of the twentieth century than they were at mid-century and are projected to be the same height as men in North America within a generation (Health Service Bureau, 2009). In each case, the main cause of growing stature is the same: A higher standard of living led to an improved diet that allowed the human body to come closer to realizing its full growth potential.

The consequences of stature are also notable. Scrutiny of many sources, ranging from US Army records since the Civil War to all Norwegian X-ray records from the 1950s, reveals that, on average, tall people live longer than others do (Steckel, 2013). Tall people also perform better on intelligence tests, earn more money, and tend to reach the top of their profession more quickly than do shorter people (Case and Paxson, 2008; Lundborg, Nystedt, and Rooth, 2015; Schick and Steckel, 2015). In Canada, researchers have found that men who are taller are more likely than are shorter men to be in positions of authority in their workplace (Gawley, Perks, and Curtis, 2009).

At least part of the reason short people tend to be less successful in some ways than are tall people is that they experience subtle discrimination based on height. In other words, the belief that shorter people are inferior to taller people will produce its expected outcome. Consider where you sit in the status hierarchy based on height. Have you ever felt advantaged or disadvantaged because of how tall you are?

WEIGHT

Just as better access to high-quality food has made it possible for us to grow taller, it has also allowed us to increase our weight. Overweight is the result of consuming more food than the body needs. Today, the proportion of Canadians who are overweight is 69.4 percent for men and 56.7 percent for women (Statistics Canada, 2019m).

The modern environment encourages people to overeat (Cohen and Lesser, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2011). In a growing number of societies, food is inexpensive, abundant, and highly processed (Popkin, Corvalan, and Grummer-Strawn, 2020). Moreover, few people need to expend much energy to secure food, find shelter, or travel. As people

become accustomed to eating more but less nutritious food and settle into sedentary lifestyles, the problem of overweight people has become a global problem (World Health Organization, 2020).

Ironically, just as the number of people who are overweight is on the rise, it is the slender body that is perceived to be the ideal body shape in most societies. Media images consistently display bodies that have been airbrushed to thin "perfection," projecting an unattainable vision of beauty and redefining what is seen as desirable. Perhaps in a society where food has become plentiful, those who restrict food intake and sculpt their bodies to be as thin as possible should be celebrated for their achievement. If true, do well-rounded bodies evoke the opposite reaction? It appears so. North Americans consistently rate overweight people as less attractive, less industrious, and less disciplined than thin people (Puhl and Heuer, 2009; Quick, McWilliams, and Byrd-Bredbenner, 2013). **Fat shaming**, defined as criticism or mockery of someone for being overweight, is a routine occurrence. Even celebrities are not protected from fat shaming (just ask James Corden, Demi Lovato, Kelly Clarkson, or Lizzo). In our culture, fat is repugnant (Lupton, 2013).

SeventyFour/Shutterstock

People who are overweight are often the subject of fat shaming.

Fat shaming is criticism or mockery of someone for being overweight.

Yet the thin body is not the ideal everywhere. In Mauritania, plump women are highly prized. Food is in short supply, so having a fat wife signifies high social status. Thin girls are seen as unmarriageable and unwanted. To ensure that their daughters will one day attract prospective suitors, many parents encourage and sometimes force young girls to eat far more than they want, producing fat bodies (Ouldzeidoune et al., 2013). Whereas camel's milk, rich in fat, would have been the substance of choice in the past, appetite-inducing pills achieve the same result today.

The cult of thinness was not cherished in the past either. In preindustrial societies, people generally favoured well-rounded physiques because they signified wealth and prestige. At a time when food was scarce, those who were wealthy cultivated round bodies as a sign to others that they had more than enough to eat. Not surprisingly, beautiful women as depicted by the great artists of the past tend to be on the heavy side by today's standards.

Our discussion suggests that fat is a feminist issue (Fikkan and Rothblum, 2012; Martz, 2019). Women's bodies tend to be subject to greater scrutiny and social control than are the bodies of men (Christine A. Smith, 2012). In particular, most women and girls are socialized to believe their bodies are subject to the judgment of the male gaze. Hence, they come to believe that their value derives from presenting themselves in ways that are pleasing to men (McKinley, 2011). It is perhaps for this reason that the fat acceptance movement, which asserts the dignity of oversized people and affirms fatness, was initially championed by feminists (Afful and Ricciardelli, 2015).

BODY PROJECTS

Despite the widespread view that people have rights over their own bodies, most people do not treat their bodies in wildly idiosyncratic ways. Instead, we tend to be influenced by norms of body practice. In part, these norms are determined by the social groups to which we belong. For example, Catholic priests are defined partly by sexual abstinence. Male Jews and Muslims are defined partly by circumcision. Many of the most important social distinctions—gender, race, age, tribe, and so on—are written on the body by different styles of dress, jewellery, tattoos, cosmetics, and so forth. People have always attempted to affect their body shape and appearance, but they usually do so according to principles laid out by society.

Alana Tompson/Barcroft Media via Getty Images

Not only do people alter their bodily appearance to conform to social norms and expectations, but subjectivity also comes into play. How individuals experience their self is based on whether and how they are able to produce a body that meets cultural or subcultural ideals (Dworkin and Wachs, 2009). That is, the body becomes personally meaningful through attempts to modify its shape and appearance.

While we once might have thought of the body as a fixed biological entity, individuals today are increasingly compelled to see the body as an unfinished object that needs to be shaped and stylized. In other words, our bodies have become projects. A **body project** is an enterprise that involves people shaping their body to express personal identity and meet cultural or subcultural expectations of beauty and health (Rose, 2007; Shilling, 2013).

A body project is an enterprise that involves people shaping their body to express their identity and meet cultural or subcultural expectations of beauty and health.

Four different types of activities characterize body projects: camouflaging, extending, adapting, and redesigning (Atkinson, 2003). *Camouflaging* involves temporary and non-invasive attempts to hide or mask aspects of the body that are seen as undesirable. It includes putting on makeup and applying deodorant and perfume. *Extending* involves overcoming a natural limitation of the body through a technological device. It includes wearing glasses and prosthetic limbs. *Adapting* is the effort to maintain the physical appearance of the body by reducing or eliminating parts of the body that elicit unfavourable responses from others. Examples include mole removal, using dye to hide greying hair, and losing weight. Finally, *redesigning* involves permanently reconstructing the body, usually for purposes of self-expression and aesthetics. It includes breast augmentation surgery, hair implants, and tattooing and piercing.

For some people, body projects are an opportunity to push the body beyond its physical limitations. Russ Foxx, a native of British Columbia, has extensively modified his body. He has tattoos, a surgically split tongue, and silicone implants on his head that look like horns. Recently, Russ implanted a computer chip in his hand that unlocks the door to his home. Embracing his new identity as a cyborg, Russ is constantly looking for ways to upgrade himself: He wants to use science and technology to transcend his current capabilities. And he isn't the only one. **Biohacking**, a radical do-it-yourself approach to experimenting with the human body through gene modification and other means of enhancement and augmentation, is becoming popular. At the same time, it has prompted some scholars to question the ethical implications of human enhancement technologies and where such efforts might lead (see Box 12.1).

Biohacking is a radical do-it-yourself approach to experimenting with the human body for enhancement and augmentation.

Time for Review

- What are the social causes and consequences of height and weight?
- What is a feminist interpretation of the social pressures to achieve the ideal body type?
- What distinguishes a body project from biohacking?

BOX 12.1 Sociology and the Media

DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN

Detroit: Become Human, a popular adventure video game by Quantic Dream, illustrates our ongoing fascination with the blurred lines between human and machine. In 2038, most humans in Detroit are unemployed and prospects for the future are dim. Advanced, lifelike androids are fully integrated into society, but their human owners resent and even abuse them. As the injustices pile up, a few androids develop consciousness. Sentience brings awareness of their oppressed condition and a desire for freedom. Feeling threatened, humans set about exterminating deviant androids. In response, deviant androids organize themselves and engage in acts of civil disobedience. It isn't long before things spiral out of control. The rebellion is underway. Can the androids figure out how to liberate themselves? Will they ever be recognized as equals by humans who want to keep them servile? Although there are many ways the game can end, the underlying question remains the same. Will a cyborg future improve humanity or hasten its demise?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What are the benefits of using machines to perform tasks normally done by humans? What are the potential drawbacks?
2. Do you think that machines will handle ethical dilemmas better than humans do? What problems do you foresee?

Disease

For those who believe that the body can be endlessly shaped, disease is a stark reminder of its biological limits. But don't think that the causes of disease are solely biological—that people become diseased because they have a genetic predisposition to a debilitating condition or get sick because they come into contact with a deadly virus or carcinogen. Nor should you assume that good health is simply the result of choosing a healthy lifestyle—eating the right type and amount of food, exercising regularly, avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, and so on. These two factors, a person's biological characteristics and health behaviours, are *individual-level* factors. Sociologists broaden their gaze by also examining *social* factors that have a profound but often unacknowledged influence on disease.

When people focus solely on factors at the level of the individual, they may find it easy to blame people who are ill for their condition. For example, when people develop diabetes, others might be inclined to say it is their own fault because they chose an unhealthy diet. Similarly, people might attribute lung cancer to a lifetime of smoking cigarettes. These sentiments convey the message that diseases stem only from people's unwise choices.

A different picture emerges when we consider individual behaviours in light of the social and environmental context. If unhealthy behaviours are freely chosen, they should be randomly distributed in the population. But they are not. Instead, behaviours such as smoking cigarettes or vaping and the consumption of fatty, calorie-dense foods vary by gender, race and ethnicity, and social class. The social patterning of health behaviours tells us that even when people think they are exercising free will, part of what drives their choices comes from their social context. Let's look more closely at the link between diet and diabetes to explore the effects of the social environment.

Canada is in the midst of a diabetes epidemic. The diabetes rate has almost doubled over the past decade (LeBlanc, Gao, McRae and Pelletier, 2019). The health-care costs of treating the illness are high, especially because people with diabetes are vulnerable to other problems such as heart disease, kidney failure, and limb amputation (Weisman et al., 2018). One major risk factor for diabetes is excess weight. As such, public health announcements encourage Canadians to eat healthy food. But this important message assumes that everybody has the same opportunity to consume healthy food.

Is access to healthy food the same for everyone? Certainly not. Processed foods that are rich in calories and fat are much cheaper than fresh fruits and vegetables. Because of the higher cost of healthy food, people on a limited budget may face enormous difficulty

following the recommended diet (Darmon and Drewsnowski, 2015). Moreover, poorer neighbourhoods generally have more fast-food outlets and convenience stores and fewer grocery stores than wealthier neighbourhoods do. Neighbourhoods with little access to grocery stores and farmers' markets have been called "food deserts." Food deserts are prevalent in poor neighbourhoods and remote areas of Canada (Burnett et al., 2017; Gould, Apparicio, and Cloutier, 2012). Consequently, telling people to improve their eating habits without making healthy foods less expensive and more accessible is unlikely to result in change, particularly for those who are poor and therefore least able to alter their behaviour. In this case, focusing only on individual behaviours prevents us from seeing how economic circumstances constrain food choices.

Once we take social context into account, we can evaluate how health is influenced by forces that lie beyond the ability of individuals to control. Let us now review two of these social forces.

SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND HEALTH

In 1980, a now-famous government study in the United Kingdom, the *Black Report*, reported a discovery that changed how we think about the relationship between poverty and health. It had been obvious that people living in poverty were on average sicker and more vulnerable to death than the rest of the population was. Even in the nineteenth century, social reformers devoted their lives to drawing attention to the miserable and unhealthy conditions of people living in poverty. However, by carefully documenting the unequal distribution of mortality and morbidity by social class in the United Kingdom, the *Black Report* described a **socioeconomic gradient in health**. Simply put, even when people had equal access to health services, small increases in class position were accompanied by a corresponding improvement in health status.

The **socioeconomic gradient in health** refers to the existence of a positive correlation between socioeconomic position and health.

As news of this finding spread, researchers began to look for similar patterns in other populations. The socioeconomic gradient in health has since been detected in numerous countries using various measures of socioeconomic position, including income and education, and various measures of health. The consistency of this relationship in countries around the world is even more remarkable when one recognizes that health-care systems vary dramatically across countries. We must conclude that socioeconomic position plays a pivotal role in health outcomes, regardless of the type of health-care system that exists in a given country.

Although we could pick any health condition and observe a socioeconomic gradient in the health of Canadians, let's stick with the example of diabetes. Figure 12.2 shows the prevalence of diabetes by income for Canadian women and men (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018). For both sexes, each increase in income is associated with a decrease in the proportion of Canadians who are diagnosed with diabetes.

An important implication of the socioeconomic gradient in health is that one cannot consider economic deprivation to be the sole cause of ill health. That is because middle-class people generally have enough resources to stay healthy, yet their health is still not as good as the health of upper-class people. Instead, socioeconomic differences in health are partly caused by the fact that the higher you are in the socioeconomic hierarchy, the less stress you experience—and continuous, low-level stress is associated with high rates of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other ailments (Marmot, 2015). Simply stated, the richer you are, the less you are exposed to stress and the better equipped you are to avoid it; a wealthier person is likely able to take a day or two off work at will or even go on vacation if the stress becomes too much to bear.

RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH

Just as socioeconomic position affects health, so too do race and ethnicity. Throughout the world, disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups experience a higher risk of disease and death than do advantaged racial and ethnic groups. For example, the mortality rate (deaths per 100 000 people) for Indigenous peoples in Canada is approximately twice the rate for non-Indigenous Canadians (Feir and Akee, 2019). The diabetes epidemic is hitting Indigenous

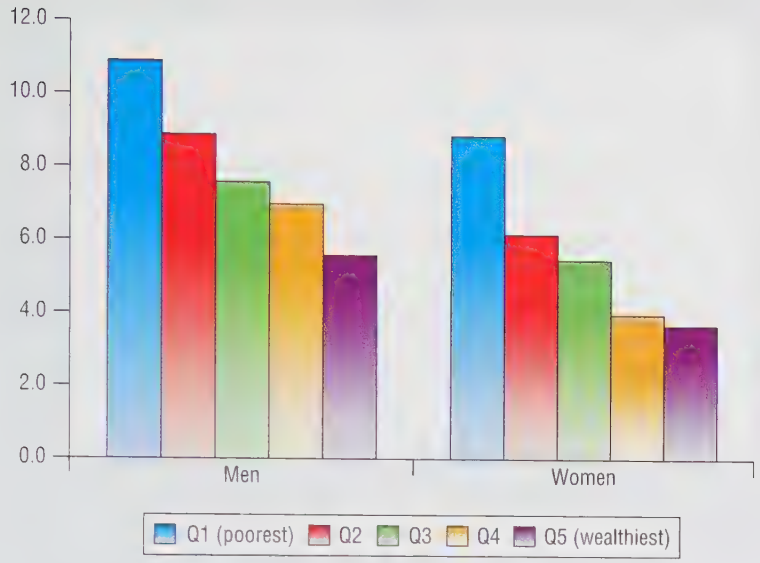

FIGURE 12.2
Prevalence of Diabetes, Canadian Men and Women, by Income Quintile, Canada

Source: Adapted from Public Health Agency of Canada (2018)

peoples in Canada particularly hard. Indigenous Canadians are at greater risk for diabetes, more likely to be diagnosed at a young age, and develop more complications from the disease than do non-Indigenous Canadians (Crowshoe et al., 2018).

How can we explain health deficits among Indigenous peoples in Canada? First and most obviously, health deficits can be traced to economic deprivation. Compared with other Canadians, Indigenous Canadians are more likely to live in poverty.

However, economic disadvantage accounts for only some of the variation in health by race and ethnicity. Many researchers believe that the remaining difference stems from the way racially or ethnically marginalized groups react to the cumulative effects of discrimination (Williams and Wyatt, 2015). At the individual level, discrimination can result in health-harming behaviours such as using drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism or avoiding seeking help for health problems. At the institutional level, segregation on reserves and in urban neighbourhoods concentrates poverty, disorder, and despair, thus deepening problems.

Finally, there are historical reasons for the relatively poor health of Indigenous peoples in Canada. European settlers in the New World seized lands suitable for farming, forcing Indigenous peoples to move onto distant reserves. Relocation made it difficult for Indigenous peoples to adapt their traditional hunting and fishing practices to resource-poor environments. Eventually, many of them abandoned their traditions and started relying on purchased food. The loss of traditional hunting methods, which assured physical fitness and contributed to a shared cultural identity, accompanied by the shift to a market-based diet and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, are central to understanding the high prevalence of diabetes in the Indigenous population (Willows, Hanley, and Delormier, 2012).

Time for Review

- Why should we look beyond individual choices to understand the risk for disease and death?
- In what ways does social context explain variations in health by socioeconomic position, race, and ethnicity?

The Power of Medicine

The **sick role** is the social mechanism that allows doctors to confer a diagnosis on an individual so that a person who is sick or injured can legitimately step away from daily responsibilities and take the requisite time to recover.

Medical doctors wield immense power, as Talcott Parsons, a prominent functionalist, noted when he first described the sick role in 1951. According to Parsons, the **sick role** is the social mechanism that society has created to deal with the problem of illness (Parsons, 1951: 428 ff.).

When people become ill, their condition may require them to step away from their normal responsibilities for a time. Before they may legitimately do so, they must present themselves to a doctor, who holds ultimate authority in deciding whether a person is ill. Once labelled ill, patients are obliged to follow the advice of their physician and strive to get well. For their part, doctors are required to be technically competent and objective—that is, not to be emotionally involved with, or prejudiced against, the patient or biased in any other way. As such, physicians serve to maintain social order. They ensure that people who are sick are permitted to shed their daily obligations and not regain them until they can recover. Similarly, doctors deny these privileges to people who fraudulently claim to be ill in an effort to avoid their social responsibilities.

In addition to enjoying power to determine who can legitimately claim the sick role, doctors maintain the exclusive right to decide which conditions will be recognized as illness. In an earlier era, when medicine held less sway, behaviours that were deviant might have been labelled as "evil." Deviants tended to be chastised, punished, and otherwise socially controlled by religious leaders. Today, however, an alcoholic, for example, is more likely to be diagnosed with a medical condition requiring professional treatment.

Medicalization is the process by which a condition or behaviour becomes defined as a medical problem requiring a medical solution.

Sociologists use the term **medicalization** to refer to the process by which "human problems or experiences become defined as medical problems, usually in terms of illnesses, diseases, or syndromes" (Conrad and Barker, 2010: S75). Once a problem has been defined as a medical condition, doctors become the only experts who are able to exercise authority over it. Thus, the process of medicalization serves to increase the power of medical doctors while reducing the power of other authorities, including judges, the police, religious leaders, and legislators.

Over time, medicalization has transformed mundane aspects of life into medical problems. For example, medicalization has transformed childbirth into an event managed by sophisticated medical technologies in the hospital, with the consequence that unmedicated vaginal delivery in the home has become rare and undesirable (Shaw, 2013). Importantly, hi-tech hospital births remain popular despite evidence that hospital births are costlier but no more beneficial to mothers or their babies than traditional home births are. Moreover, some women have come to resent the disempowerment that childbirth represents because physicians oversee and control every step of the process.

Medicalization is ongoing. For example, since 2013 the American Medical Association has designated obesity as a disease, setting aside its previous classification as either a symptom or a risk factor for illness. The decision has both positive and negative implications. A benefit of labelling obesity a disease is that researchers and governments may be encouraged to invest more money to learn about it. The resulting research could translate into better treatments. Investment in obesity research could make it easier for people who seek treatment to have expenses covered by health insurance rather than out of pocket. Moreover, people diagnosed with obesity may no longer be viewed as lazy or undisciplined. It may also be more difficult to hold obese people personally responsible for a condition to which they might be biologically predisposed.

Among the disadvantages of recognizing obesity as a disease is the fact that surgical interventions and medication for weight loss will increasingly be seen as reasonable solutions. Consequently, obese people will face greater pressure to undergo medical procedures even when these interventions are known to be ineffective, involve harmful side effects, or result in occasional fatalities. A second problem with defining obesity as a disease is that it tries to fix people rather than the underlying social causes of their ailment. For instance, the problem of food deserts may fade from view if doctors can convince the public that medical procedures are the best way to solve the problem of obesity.

Just as the medical profession has the power to medicalize certain conditions, it has the ability to de-medicalize them. This twin capacity becomes evident when we consider the field of psychiatry.

Medical Power and Mental Illness

In 1974, a condition that had been considered a psychiatric disorder for more than a century ceased to be labelled as such by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Did the condition disappear because it had become rare to the point of extinction? No. Did the discovery of a new wonder drug eradicate the condition virtually overnight? Again, no. In fact, in 1974, the condition was perhaps more widespread and certainly more public than ever before. Paradoxically, just as the extent of the condition was becoming more widely appreciated, the APA's "bible," the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), ceased to define it as a psychiatric disorder.

The "condition" we are referring to is homosexuality. In preparing the third edition of the DSM for publication, a squabble broke out among psychiatrists over whether homosexuality is in fact a psychiatric disorder. Gay and lesbian activists, who sought to destigmatize homosexuality, were partly responsible for a shift in the views of many psychiatrists on this subject. In the end, the APA decided that homosexuality is not a psychiatric disorder.

The controversy over homosexuality is only one of many examples illustrating that decisions about which disorders to include in the DSM are sometimes based less on science than on changing values and power struggles.

Challenges to Medical Science

Medical power is not absolute. Much has changed since Talcott Parsons described the authority of medical doctors over their patients. Today, it is commonplace for patients to learn about medical treatments on their own and for doctors to involve patients in deciding on appropriate treatment options. This change in the relationship between patient and doctor is the result of people acquiring the knowledge, vocabulary, self-confidence, and political organization to challenge medical authority. Compared with people in the 1950s, we are more educated today. In 2020, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* followed the lead of other prominent medical journals in making its content freely available to the public. Other people use Google to self-diagnose. Advocacy groups such as the Schizophrenia Society of Canada, Diabetes Canada, and the Canadian Cancer Society offer support and a voice for those affected by the respective conditions. Because people have more places to turn to for medical advice than they did in the past, they are no longer completely dependent on their doctors.

In addition, the growing popularity of treatments outside mainstream medicine is weakening medical authority. *Complementary and alternative medicine,* as it is often called, appears to fulfill an unmet need in health care. Providers of complementary and alternative medicine are more likely than doctors are to approach patient care holistically, which is to say they value the experience and knowledge of their clients and see themselves as working collaboratively with clients to achieve wellness in body and mind.

The declining authority of medicine has empowered patients, who now often make decisions that go against the advice of physicians. However, as Box 12.2 illustrates, not all challenges to medical authority produce positive outcomes.

Time for Review

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of medicalization?
- Why do medical doctors have less authority today than they did in the past?

BOX 12.2 Social Policy

COVID-19 AND THE VACCINATION DEBATE

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced society's dependence on medicine. Yet many Canadians doubt medical expertise. They think medicine often does more harm than good.

Consider the recent spike in measles and whooping cough outbreaks in Canada. Vaccinations for these diseases were discovered more than 60 years ago. After the vaccinations became widely available, both diseases, historically leading killers of children, were nearly wiped out. Why then are outbreaks occurring today? Because a growing number of parents refuse to have their children vaccinated against these diseases. Some parents think vaccines will cause their child to develop autism despite the absence of any scientific evidence supporting the claim. Other parents are simply vaccine-hesitant—they are swayed by numerous Internet forums promoting the message that vaccines are unsafe—again, with no credible evidence. With fewer than half of Canadians confident in the safety of vaccines (Wellcome Global Monitor, 2019), a surge in childhood infectious disease was entirely predictable.

In 2020, public health officials anticipated that people who zealously oppose vaccines would say the COVID-19 vaccine was rushed to market and is therefore unsafe. However, the plain fact is that Canadians who refuse to be vaccinated against COVID-19 will be at risk of infection, complications, and death, with all Canadian taxpayers responsible for the cost of their health care.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Should the government require Canadians to be vaccinated against COVID-19? Should the risk to the general population outweigh personal preference to refuse vaccinations? Or should people have the final say in what happens to their bodies?
2. As people become more educated and knowledgeable about medicine, they have become more inclined to discuss treatments with their doctors and even challenge their doctors' recommendations. Has such questioning now gone too far? Where and how should we draw the line between responsible decision making on the part of patients and their wilful ignorance of medical science?

Disability

A disability is a physical or mental characteristic that keeps some people from performing within the range of normal human activity. It is also a social relationship insofar as a physical or social barrier may restrict the opportunity of some people to participate in the life of a community on a level equal with others.

Bodies that do not look or perform in the same way that other bodies do are commonly interpreted as different and sometimes as disabled. But what is disability? By one definition, a **disability** is a physical or mental characteristic that keeps people from performing within the range of normal human activity. In this view, disability is a characteristic of *individuals*. Proponents of this definition are likely to believe that people with disabilities need to be cured or rehabilitated. They may also see people with disabilities as objects of charity, medical treatment, and social protection.

A second definition regards disability as a *social relationship*. From this point of view, a physical or social barrier may restrict the opportunity of some people to participate in the normal life of a community on a level equal with others. Parents, teachers, religious leaders, athletic coaches, and doctors, among others, act to enforce the norms that guide their respective institutions. Consequently, those in authority have the power to define what is normal and to decide what disabled people can do and what they can become. For example, Helen, a schoolteacher who is partially sighted, described her own childhood experiences this way:

> One insecure young [teacher] made life rather difficult for me. When he took over my group, he told everyone where to sit, sending tall people to the back. I tried to explain that I needed to sit at the front, but he just would not listen. He told me to keep quiet. He then put some work on the board and told us to get on with it. I put up my hand to tell him that I couldn't read what was on the board, but he told me to put my hand down and get on with my work. When I started to say that I couldn't read what was on the board, he sent me out of the room and afterwards gave me detention for arguing. [The teacher] said that I was a lazy, idle good-for-nothing who had never done a stroke of work. . . . (Thomas, 1999: 21)

As this example suggests, the teacher's attempts to impose order in the classroom by seating children according to their height is what produced Helen's disability (Thomas, 1999). Her disability became more apparent when the rules of the institution were prioritized over her own needs.

Defining disability as a social relationship makes it easier to recognize that the distinction between an able body and a disabled body is socially constructed and that it varies over time and place, as do strategies for dealing with disabilities. We consider these issues next.

The Social Construction of Disability

Left-handed people have been considered inferior for centuries. About 400 years ago, the Catholic Church declared left-handed people servants of the Devil and burned some of them at the stake. Then it forced lefties to become right-handed in school. As recently as the early twentieth century, men in Japan had grounds for divorce if their wife was left-handed. Almost universally, people have considered left-handedness to be a disability, so much so that the sentiment has been embedded in many languages. In Russian, doing something under the table or illegally is referred to as doing something *na levo,* which translates literally as "on the left." In English, the word *left* originates from an Old English word that means "weak" or "worthless." Also in English, *gauche* means "ill-mannered"—but the French from which it is derived means "left." In Latin, "right" is *dexter* (as in the English *dextrous,* a desirable characteristic) while "left" is *sinister,* which means "evil." *Linkisch* is German for "leftish"—and "awkward."

Today, we consider negative attitudes toward left-handedness nonsensical. The roughly 10 percent of the population that is left-handed are not thought of as disabled or physically or mentally deficient. The fact that so many people once thought differently suggests that definitions of disability vary socially and historically rather than being based on self-evident biological realities. Note also that while some people consider a 1.5-metre-tall person to have a disability, others do not. Similarly, advertising has convinced most people that erectile dysfunction in a 75-year-old man is a disability. These examples suggest that definitions of disability vary across societies and historical periods, and that people may disagree over these definitions depending on time and place.

Rehabilitation and Elimination

Beginning in the nineteenth century, scientists and reformers viewed disability as a self-evident biological reality. Some scientists and reformers sought the **rehabilitation** of people with disabilities, which involves using medical and technological methods to cure disabilities as much as possible. It also includes using care, training, and education to try to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Finally, rehabilitation entails integrating people with disabilities into society (Longmore, 2003).

Rehabilitation involves curing disabilities to the extent possible through medical and technological intervention; trying to improve the lives of people with disabilities by means of care, training, and education; and integrating people with disabilities into society.

The desire for rehabilitation led to the founding of schools for children who are blind, the extensive use of prosthetics, the construction of wheelchair-accessible buildings, and so on. It also prompted the passage of laws that benefit those with disabilities by mandating accessibility to buildings, public transportation, and jobs. These laws have done much to help integrate people with disabilities into society.

At the same time, rehabilitation has had its problems. Many rehabilitation strategies were implemented without consulting people with disabilities. Instead, medical doctors and social service agencies were presumed to be experts and imposed their preconceptions about disability on their clients. People with disabilities have often been critical of the paternalistic attitudes inherent in rehabilitation, insisting that their own experience and their knowledge of their own bodies make them authorities on how people with disabilities should be accommodated.

Other scientists and reformers took a more sinister tack by killing people who had a disability or by sterilizing them and preventing them from having children in an effort to eliminate all disability. In 1933, the Nazis began using this approach in Germany. They sterilized and killed the mentally "deficient" and the physically "deviant," including people who were blind and those who were deaf (Proctor, 1988).

One of the ugliest chapters in Canadian history involves the government-funded, forced sterilization of those deemed to be mentally defective. The practice was systematically carried out by medical authorities. In Alberta, for example, sexual sterilization was performed on nearly 3000 people between 1928 and 1972 (Grekul, Krahn, and Odynak, 2004). Like the Nazis, advocates of sexual sterilization in Canada were swayed by their faith in eugenics. **Eugenics** is the belief that the human race can be improved by controlling which people can become parents. Science has provided compelling evidence that disability is rarely a heritable characteristic but some people nonetheless continue to endorse eugenics.

Eugenics is the belief that the human race can be improved by controlling which people can become parents.

Ableism

Because the human environment is structured largely around the norms of those without disabilities, people with disabilities suffer many disadvantages. In particular, people regularly stigmatize people with disabilities, negatively evaluating them because of a characteristic that supposedly sets them apart from others. People also apply stereotypes when dealing with people with disabilities, expecting them to behave according to an inflexible and often incorrect view of how all people with that disability act. The resulting prejudice and discrimination against people with disabilities is called **ableism**.

Ableism is prejudice and discrimination against people who have disabilities.

There are many historical examples of ableism. For instance, nineteenth-century Western educators tended to believe that people who are blind are incapable of high-level or abstract thought. As a result, people who were blind were rarely encouraged to pursue intellectually challenging tasks and occupations. An 1858 article in the *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* stated that "the deaf and dumb are guided almost wholly by instinct and their animal passions. They have no more opportunity of cultivating the intellect and reasoning facilities than the savages of Patagonia or the North American Indians" (quoted in Groce, 1985: 102). While racists consider members of racial minorities to be naturally and incurably inferior, ableists think the same way of people with disabilities. As the preceding quotation suggests, racists and ableists were often one and the same.

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Architecture and urban planning that neglect some modes of mobility make life difficult for people who have to use crutches or depend on walkers or wheelchairs.

Today, the Constitution of Canada prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. However, it protects people who have disabilities only from the actions of the federal government, not from private organizations and individuals (Barnett, Nicol, and Walker, 2012). Unlike the United States, Canada lacks national legislation to mandate accommodation in the workplace for people with disabilities. Consequently, Canada has a patchwork of provincial and territorial laws that vary in their ability to assure equal treatment for Canadians with disabilities in the workplace.

Evidence suggests that Canadians with disabilities encounter barriers in their places of employment. Compared with the average Canadian, Canadians with disabilities are less likely to be employed when they are of working age. When they are employed, they are less likely to advance to a position of authority and are paid less on average than their counterparts living without disabilities. They are also more likely to experience involuntary retirement (Battams, 2013; Denton, Plenderleith, and Chowhan, 2013; Gunderson and Lee, 2016; Jones, 2008).

Ableism also involves unintended *neglect* of the conditions of people with disabilities in addition to active prejudice and discrimination. Anyone who needs a wheelchair to get around clearly understands this point. Although many buildings are constructed without

intending to discriminate against people in wheelchairs, in reality they are extremely unwelcoming to them. Thus, physical impairments become disabilities when the human environment is constructed largely on the basis of ableism. Ableism exists through both intention and neglect.

Challenging Ableism: The Normality of Disability

Science fiction writer H. G. Wells published a short story called "The Country of the Blind" (Wells, 1927). The story's protagonist, Nuñez, survives an avalanche high in the Andes, waking up on the outskirts of an isolated village in a mountain valley. He discovers that all of the inhabitants of the town are blind because of a disease that struck 14 generations earlier. Words like *see, look,* and *blind* have no meaning to them.

Nuñez feels immensely superior to the villagers because he can see and considers himself their "Heaven-sent King and master." However, he realizes over time that he is at a disadvantage because the villagers have designed their community for the benefit of people who cannot see. The villagers' senses of hearing and touch are more highly developed than his are, and they move gracefully while Nuñez stumbles as he constantly rants about seeing.

His hosts come to believe that he is out of touch with reality. The village head concludes that Nuñez is "an idiot. He has delusions; he can't do anything right." In this way, Nuñez's vision becomes a disability. A doctor concludes only one thing can cure Nuñez of his ailment—he must be blinded. Thus, Wells provocatively reverses the old saying that "in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king." He suggests that in the land of the blind, the man who sees must lose his vision or be regarded as a raving idiot.

Wells's tale is notable because it depicts blindness as normal, similar to the way many people with disabilities think of their disabilities—not as a form of deviance but as a different form of normality. The idea of disability as a kind of normality has partly displaced the idea that people with disabilities need to be rehabilitated.

Reformers without disabilities originally led the rehabilitation movement. However, the situation began to change in the 1960s when people with disabilities began to organize themselves (Campbell and Oliver, 1996). The new movement grew globally and also became more legitimate with the founding of the organization Disabled Peoples International in 1981 and the inclusion of the rights of those with disabilities in the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1985. Since then, people with disabilities have been asserting their autonomy and the "dignity of difference" (Barnes and Mercer, 2003). They insist on self-help rather than requesting help from others, and they view disability as a social problem rather than a personal tragedy. In other words, they think of themselves as inhabiting a different but quite normal world.

Deaf culture illustrates that the normality of disability sometimes produces unanticipated consequences. With a history extending back to the mid-nineteenth century, Deaf culture was in existence long before the disability rights movement (Burch, 2002). Proponents of Deaf culture believe that people who are deaf share a collective identity with others who are deaf. Many deaf people do not feel humiliated by the seeming disadvantage of deafness but take pride in their condition. Indeed, they see themselves as members of a minority cultural group, defined by their use of sign language, not as people defined by their disability (Ladd, 2003).

Recently, medical advances have begun to expose rifts in Deaf culture (Sparrow, 2010). Cochlear implants are particularly controversial. Many in the deaf community deplore the use of cochlear implants because it implies that deafness is a condition to be corrected and that deaf people should not use sign language. It is left to parents of deaf children (most of whom are not deaf) to navigate these tensions (Mauldin, 2016). Some people are eager for a technology that can make the lives of their children easier. They believe their children need to hear to become successful, independent, and happy adults. At the same time, parents fear how some people might respond: "If a Deaf person saw you with your implanted child, they would actually accost you and say you maimed your child, how could you do that?" (Mauldin, 2016: 139).

As you can see, ableism shapes how people with disabilities experience social exclusion and respond to social pressures to conform.

Time for Review

- What evidence suggests that disability is socially constructed?
- How did historical forms of treatment perpetuate disability stereotypes and harm disabled people?
- In what ways does ableism negatively affect the lives of Canadians?

Aging

The Sociology of Aging

Although many people think of aging as a natural process that inevitably overcomes our best efforts to postpone death, sociologists see aging as a more complex process. For them, the character of aging varies from one society to the next, with different societies attaching different meanings to aging bodies.

Age can also be a basis for social division. Some observers believe that in Canada and other aging societies, older people are gaining power at the expense of younger people. Others note that our cultural preoccupation with youthfulness continues to fuel distaste for aging bodies and to promote negative perceptions of older people (Calasanti, 2007). On the following pages, we describe the phenomenon of population aging and then we assess whether demographic change is influencing the power and treatment of older people.

Population Aging in Canada and Globally

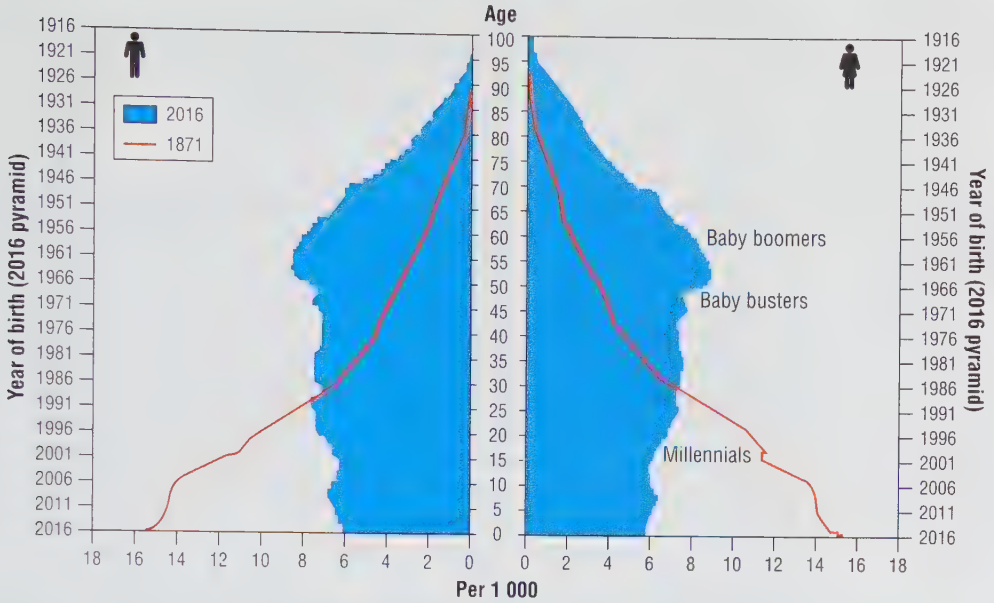
In 2016, Canada passed an important threshold. For the first time, the census recorded that adults over the age of 65 outnumbered children under the age of 15 (Statistics Canada, 2017i). More than 150 years ago, fewer than 5 percent of Canadians were 65 or older, but in 2020, the corresponding figure exceeded 17 percent. One way to visualize population aging in Canada is by examining **population pyramids**, graphs that show the percentage of men and women in each five-year age range (Figure 12.3). Because older and younger people have different needs, change in population composition has wide-ranging implications for housing, education, employment, pensions, and health care.

Population pyramids are graphs that show the percentage of the population in various age and sex cohorts.

The number of seniors in Canada has increased for three main reasons. First, nearly a third of Canada's citizens (approximately 10 million people) were born during the 20-year baby boom after World War II. During that period, Canadian women gave birth to four children on average (Wister, 2005). Second, **life expectancy** (the number of years people are expected to live on average) has increased because of improvements in sanitation, nutrition, housing, and medical care. Third, Canada's low birth rate contributes to a higher percentage of older people in the population.

Life expectancy is the number of years people are expected to live on average.

Canada is not the only country with an aging population. In many other middle- and high-income countries, population aging is also a pressing issue. Canada has a smaller percentage of seniors than are found in Japan (28 percent), Italy (23 percent), Portugal (22 percent), and Finland (22 percent) (United Nations, 2019). In the coming years, the population of the world's seniors will see a staggering rise, from 703 million people in 2019 to more than 1.5 billion in 2050. This means that nearly one in six people will be over the age of 65 in 2050. The implications of population aging have yet to be fully appreciated, but its effects will surely be felt almost everywhere.



Source: Statistics Canada, Age and sex, and type of dwelling data: Key results from the 2016 Census. (2017) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/170503/dq170503a-eng.pdf?st=rdYeDq1_

FIGURE 12.3

Population Pyramid, Canada, 1871 and 2016. Contrast the differences in the population pyramid of Canada in 1871 (red line) with the current situation (area shaded blue).

Intergenerational Tensions: A Conflict Interpretation

According to conflict theorists, the struggle for power may sometimes pit older people against younger people. For example, some people believe that ancient China and other preindustrial societies were **gerontocracies** in which the oldest citizens enjoyed the highest standing and held the most power. Although some societies may approximate a gerontocracy, its extent has been exaggerated. Powerful, wealthy, and prestigious leaders today are typically mature, but they are rarely the oldest people in a society.

Gerontocracies are societies ruled by older people.

Like King Lear, seniors often give up power and become marginalized. Even in traditional societies that held seniors in high esteem, aging was not usually seen as an unambiguous good. Ambivalence about aging—especially as people reach the oldest age cohorts—is a cultural universal. As one historian writes, "Youth has always and everywhere been preferred to old age. Since the dawn of history, old people have regretted [the loss of] their youth and young people have feared the onset of old age" (Minois, 1989 [1987]).

Just as true gerontocracy is uncommon, so is rule by youth. True, relatively young age cohorts sometimes supply most of a country's political leadership. This situation happened in revolutionary France in the late eighteenth century, revolutionary Russia in the early twentieth century, and revolutionary China in the mid-twentieth century. However, youthful ruling cadres may become gerontocracies in their own right, especially in nondemocratic societies, as was the case with the Russian communist leadership in the 1980s and the Chinese communist leadership in the 1990s; the young generation that had grabbed power half a century earlier still clung on as old age approached.

While neither young nor old wield absolute control in Canada today, tensions can simmer between young and old. Young adults who struggle to gain a foothold in the labour market and must make do with jobs that offer low wages and little security sometimes resent the success of older generations who benefited from an earlier period of steady employment and strong pension plans. In a similar way, some members of older generations look with consternation on young adults' delayed transition to independence. They fail to recognize

that the world that today's young adults are struggling to enter has fewer good job opportunities than does the world they inhabited only a generation or two ago. Such misperceptions can fuel intergenerational conflict, particularly during hard economic times (Furstenberg, 2010; Walker, 2012). However, no evidence suggests that intergenerational conflict is a serious political problem (Krieger and Ruhose, 2013).

AGEISM

Ageism is prejudice and discrimination against older people.

Being older is often considered a social stigma, especially in societies that place a high value on youth and vitality. **Ageism** is prejudice about, and discrimination against, older people. For example, ageism occurs when older men are stereotyped as "grumpy" or "feeble" and are then treated accordingly.

Stereotypes of aging convey the message that the lives of older people are filled with decline, loss, and dependency. Because disease and death are more likely to occur when one is old, some people assume that all aging bodies must be sickly and decrepit. Loss is also assumed to pervade all aspects of the lives of older people. Typically, losing the role of worker signals entry into old age. As people age, the death of their contemporaries thins out social relationships, leading to isolation. The death of a spouse or partner is perceived as the most devastating loss, and it too occurs more frequently in later life. Finally, because seniors no longer engage in paid work and sometimes require assistance from others, particularly when they fall ill, seniors are often seen as dependent—as care recipients rather than those who give care.

In reality, although health certainly declines with age, seniors are in better health today than ever before (Margolis and Iciaszczyk, 2015). Their good health is due to their healthier lifestyles and the medical advances of recent decades. Similarly, although seniors do experience a thinning out of their social networks, they can and often do develop new roles that enrich their lives (Sinha, 2014a). Volunteering allows seniors to remain engaged in their communities and to forge new social ties. Grandparenthood is, for many, a deeply rewarding and highly anticipated role in later life. Few seniors miss full-time work, particularly when they are able to plan for and control the circumstances of their retirement, but many continue to work part-time. Finally, the overwhelming majority of seniors live independently. Fewer than 7 percent of seniors live in senior citizens' residences or healthcare facilities (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Thus, evidence shows that seniors are generally healthy, socially active, and contributing members of society.

Some analysts suggest that precisely because our population includes more seniors than ever, the stereotypes of aging are slowly dissipating. Do we have a newfound appreciation for older people? More than a decade ago, one Canadian study examined age-specific birthday cards for sale in retail outlets, finding that nearly two out of three cards reinforced negative perceptions of aging (Ellis and Morrison, 2005). Getting older was equated with physical and cognitive decline and as a stage of life to be dreaded. Have things changed for the better since this study was published? The next time you are looking for a birthday card for an older person, take a look at the messages conveyed in these cards and judge for yourself whether the situation has improved.

The active life of many seniors today is very different from traditional stereotypes.

Pressmaster/Shutterstock

THE WEALTH AND POWER OF SENIORS IN CANADA

Conflict theorists argue that age influences power insofar as, compared with younger people, older people may have more money and political authority and thus may be held in higher regard. From this point of view, one way of assessing the power of seniors is to examine their poverty rate. The lower their poverty rate, the greater their power.

Starting in the 1970s, poverty rates among Canadian seniors fell dramatically, from about 25 percent to approximately 7 percent by the turn of the century (Milligan, 2008). Their improved economic status was the outcome of new income security programs, such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and the Old Age Security (OAS) pension (Schirle, 2013). These policies have been so successful that, among high-income countries, Canada boasts one of the lowest rates of poverty for seniors, behind only the Netherlands and France.

This success is tempered by recent changes. The poverty rate among seniors has started to creep up in Canada, even as poverty rates for seniors are declining in other countries (OECD, 2013a). Pension reform, enacted partly to offset the projected economic burden of aging populations, will reduce benefits for Canadian seniors in the future. Moreover, few working-age Canadians have been saving enough to be able to support themselves later in life (Shillington, 2016). Growing economic disparity among seniors is likely to result; people with private pensions and the opportunity to put money away during their working years will be better able to meet their needs in retirement than will people who lack private pensions and opportunities to save. So, while the current generation of seniors can use their economic resources to prolong their health and live independently, some members of future generations of seniors may not have the resources they need to age in the same way.

Time for Review

- In what ways is population aging a global phenomenon?
- What evidence disproves the stereotypes of aging?
- Why might Canadian seniors be poorer in the future than they are today?

Death and Dying

It may be odd to say so, but the ultimate *social* problem that everyone must face is death. Why are death and dying social problems and not just religious, philosophical, and medical issues? Because attitudes toward death vary widely across time and place, as do the settings where death typically occurs.

People have always dreaded death. However, most people accepted it, in part because most believed in life after death, whether as a continuation of life in Heaven or as cyclical rebirth (Ariès, 1982). In addition, death was easier to accept because the dying were not isolated from other people. Rather, they continued to interact with and receive emotional support from household members and neighbours. People learned to accept their own death more easily as a part of everyday life because they had experienced giving emotional support to dying people. In fact, death was so much a part of everyday life that, in some places, bay windows with indoor benches attached to them were once used to display the bodies of the recently deceased to neighbours.

In contrast, we tend to separate dying and death from everyday life. Although most terminally ill Canadians want to die peacefully and with dignity at home, surrounded by their loved ones, most die in hospitals or long-term care institutions, surrounded by medical professionals and life-prolonging technologies. While death used to be public, it is now largely hidden. We are unlikely to encounter death outside of a hospital or funeral home. Consequently, we are less prepared for death than our ancestors were.

Our reluctance to accept death is evident from the many euphemisms we use to symbolically separate ourselves from the horror of death. We say that the dead have "passed away" or "gone to meet their Maker" or are "in a better place." Sometimes we use humorous expressions as a distancing mechanism. We comment that people have "croaked" or "kicked the bucket" or "cashed in their chips" or that they are "pushing up daisies."

Psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross based her analysis of the stages of dying on interviews with patients who were told they had an incurable disease (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Her findings suggest the extent to which we are reluctant to accept death. At first, the patients refused to believe their death was imminent, the *denial* stage. Then they expressed *anger,* viewing their death as unjust. *Bargaining* occurred next, when the patients begged God or fate to delay their death. In the next stage, *depression,* they resigned themselves to their fate but became deeply despondent. It was only then that the patients reached the stage of *acceptance,* which involved putting their affairs in order, expressing regret over not having done certain things when they had the opportunity, and possibly speaking about going to Heaven.

Subsequent research has not provided strong evidence that those five stages are experienced by all dying people or that they are experienced in the sequence Kübler-Ross originally described. However, Kübler-Ross herself cautioned against a formulaic approach to death, suggesting that attempts to categorize death could dehumanize the experience. Rather, she instructed others to "use the stages as an 'algorithm' to remind you to listen, and to respect the depths of the patient's experience" (Dugan, 2004: W26).

Biological Death and Social Death

Death is usually perceived as a binary category—a person is either alive or dead. In reality, the boundary between life and death is fuzzy. It becomes even more clouded when we distinguish biological death from social death. Biological death involves the end of the living body; social death is the termination of its social presence.

Social and biological deaths do not necessarily occur together (Seale, 1998). Social death may take place after biological death—sometimes long after. Dead people may retain a social presence when loved ones visit their gravesite and talk aloud to them. In China, a connection with the dead is institutionalized in the practice of ancestor worship. On the other hand, social death may precede biological death. For example, Alzheimer's disease can erase memories and a person's identity to the point that loved ones feel that the person has already departed, despite the continuation of vital signs. The task of negotiating the ambiguity between social and biological death falls to those who survive the deceased. In contrast, the decision to end their life with medical assistance is left to individuals faced with their own mortality.

Medical Assistance in Dying

June 17, 2016, was a historic day in Canada. On that date, Bill C-14 received royal assent and became law. This meant that medical assistance in dying would no longer be treated as a criminal offence if provided according to the conditions stipulated by the federal government.

To be eligible for physician-assisted death, a person must be at least 18 years old, suffering from a "grievous and irremediable" medical condition and his or her natural death must be "reasonably foreseeable." In addition, the person seeking physician-assisted death must be mentally competent and capable of making decisions at the moment that the service is provided. For their part, physicians (and nurse practitioners in some provinces) can assist in the death of their patient in one of two ways. The first involves a physician directly administering a substance that causes the patient to die. Alternatively, the physician may give or prescribe a drug to the patient that he or she can take himself or herself to cause death.

By October 2018, 6749 Canadians received medical assistance in dying. This figure represents a little more than 1 percent of all deaths in Canada over the period in question (Health Canada, 2019). However, because not everyone who wants physician-assisted death can obtain it, the law is being challenged on several fronts. Some people are concerned that by excluding those under the age of 18 and those whose sole condition is a mental disorder, not all Canadians are able to exercise their constitutional right to medical assistance in dying.

A recent court case in Quebec contested the vagueness of death as "reasonably foreseeable." The plaintiffs, both suffering from degenerative diseases, were prohibited from medical assistance in dying because their death was not imminent. The judge agreed, finding that suffering from a serious and irremediable condition should matter more than whether death is near (Rukavina, 2019). Expected changes to the law on medically assisted death will no doubt lead to an increase in the number of Canadians who choose this option.

FINAL DISPOSITION OF THE BODY

After biological death has been certified, the formal process can begin to mark the transition of the deceased person from the land of the living. Funeral rites are a way to release the deceased person from earthly obligations and to allow the living to repair the rift in the social fabric that is created when death occurs. As such, funerals are symbolic and full of meaning. Nonetheless, sociologists may interpret what happens at funerals in different ways. Whereas functionalists would suggest that the emotional outpouring that occurs bonds community members to one another, conflict theorists would point out that funerals are also moments when family members may feud with one another, compete for the dead person's possessions, and let their emotions get the best of them. As a lawyer once said, "Where there's a will, there's a relative."

Funerals were once steeped in tradition and therefore were pretty much standardized. For example, it was customary among Christians in North America to hold funerals with black hearses, wooden coffins, sombre garb for mourners, and the singing of hymns at a church service followed by a graveside ceremony (King, 2008). This unvarying routine has since given way to new and diverse practices. Increasingly, the focus is on the person rather than the body (McManus, 2013). Although this trend has many manifestations, we briefly discuss new trends in the disposition of the body to demonstrate the ways in which death has become personalized.

In the not-so-distant past, decisions about the final resting place of the body were focused on finding a suitable plot in an appropriate cemetery. Today, most Canadians are cremated when they die. Moreover, an ever-expanding range of options are available for the final resting place of the dead. Ashes may be kept in an urn by family members, scattered on private property or in open public space such as the sea, buried in a cemetery, or placed in a memorial facility for the storage of the remains. In keeping with the desire to imbue the body with unique meaning, we can transform the remains into a diamond (by compressing the ashes—largely carbon—under extremely high pressure) or produce art objects out of them (by incorporating the ashes in paint or glass). Family members may then wear the diamonds or display the artwork at home as a reminder of their loved one. Even more exotic choices exist. Celestis Inc. places ashes in a capsule that is shot into Earth's orbit until it vaporizes when re-entering the atmosphere. As these examples illustrate, we no longer need to seclude the dead in cemeteries. We can allow the dead to participate in activities of the living.

Some sociologists suggest that the modern preoccupation with finding unique ways to dispose of human bodies and an accompanying desire for individuals to design their own funerals signal a new openness to death and a corresponding shift away from the denial of death (Seale, 1998; McManus, 2013).

Time for Review

- In what ways has death become less public and more hidden?
- What are some of the perceived shortcomings of Canada's law on physician-assisted death?

Summary

1. **What are the social causes and consequences associated with bodily appearance and presentation?**
   The human body cannot be fully understood without appreciating its social dimension. For example, economic development and agricultural advances have made it possible for more people to meet their nutritional requirements, resulting in increases in both height and weight. Eventually, an abundant food supply and sedentary lifestyle enticed people to eat more than they needed, turning overweight into a social problem. These changes were matched by a shift in preference for the ideal body type. Particularly in Western society, fat bodies have become undesirable and stigmatized, so social sanctions are imposed on people who exceed what is deemed to be an acceptable body weight.

2. **In what sense are body projects both social and personal?**
   People have always adorned and modified their bodies. In the past, bodies were usually altered using traditional signs, and the practice of altering the body served purely social functions. Today, however, people are preoccupied with the appearance of the body as an expression of individual identity. Even so, these expressions generally conform to existing norms about how bodies ought to look.

3. **Are all causes of illness biological?**
   Ultimately, yes. However, when taking social context into account, we see that social factors often precede individual-level causes of illness. Specifically, health risks are lower among upper classes and members of privileged racial and ethnic groups than among lower classes and members of disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.

4. **How does medicine exert social control over health and illness?**
   Medical doctors retain exclusive control over who is allowed to take on the sick role and what conditions qualify as disease. Their decision to label a growing number of conditions as illnesses is a key feature of medicalization, with profound consequences for how others respond to labelled individuals and for the self-perception of those who have been so labelled. At the same time, an educated and informed public has become increasingly likely to challenge medical authority by demanding greater say in their own care and greater choice in health practitioners, including a preference for healers outside mainstream medicine.

5. **How have definitions and responses to disability varied over time and place?**
   Disability is sometimes defined as a physical or mental problem that keeps a person from performing within the range of normal human activity. Defined in this way, disability becomes a problem in need of a cure and justifies a rehabilitation approach that forces people with disabilities to depend on health-care professionals to cure them. In response, sociologists and disability activists have expanded the definition of disability to include the loss of opportunity to take part in the normal life of a community on an equal level due to physical or social barriers. This definition suggests that society needs to change more than does the individual who has the disability. It also conveys that disability is socially constructed, occurring when some people have the power to apply the label of disability to others. To the extent that this definition acknowledges the personhood of people with disabilities and accepts the normality of difference, it has the potential to alleviate the prejudice and discrimination that people with disabilities often encounter.

6. How might population aging reduce ageist attitudes and affect power imbalances between young and old?

Because of the global trend toward rising life expectancy and reduced fertility, one in six people on the planet will be over the age of 65 by 2050. The implications of population aging are profound, affecting countries' policies around housing, employment, pensions, health care, and much more. Ageist stereotypes continue to paint older people as sickly, in decline, and dependent on others, despite evidence to the contrary. While neither the young nor the old hold absolute power in any modern society, both young and old may perceive that their generation is being unfairly treated. These sentiments may fuel intergenerational conflict, particularly in difficult economic times, but so far they do not appear to be appreciably altering the balance of power toward any age group.

7. What is sociological about death and dying?

Death is more than the end of our material existence. It is a socially recognized and managed phenomenon. For example, funerals accomplish the practical task of disposing of human remains but also symbolically represent the movement of the dead person out of the world of the living. The different ways in which societies negotiate the dying process and engage in death practices reveal fundamental features of social life in a given time and place. Our approach to death informs how we live.

PART 4
Institutions

CHAPTER 13
Political Economy

CHAPTER 14
Families

CHAPTER 15
Religion

CHAPTER 16
Education

CHAPTER 17
Mass and Social Media

CHAPTER 18
Collective Action and Social Movements

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Technology, Population, and the Environment

13 Political Economy

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Conceptualize political economy as the study of how wealth influences power and power influences wealth.
- Distinguish power and authority, types of authority, and types of political system.
- Identify the categories of the population that tend to support different political and economic policies and why they do so.
- Summarize the factors affecting the mix of "good" and "bad" jobs in society and the public policies that contribute to the mix.
- Sketch the ways in which globalization has invigorated anti-democratic movements worldwide.
- Interpret the rise of women in politics and the constraints on their progress.

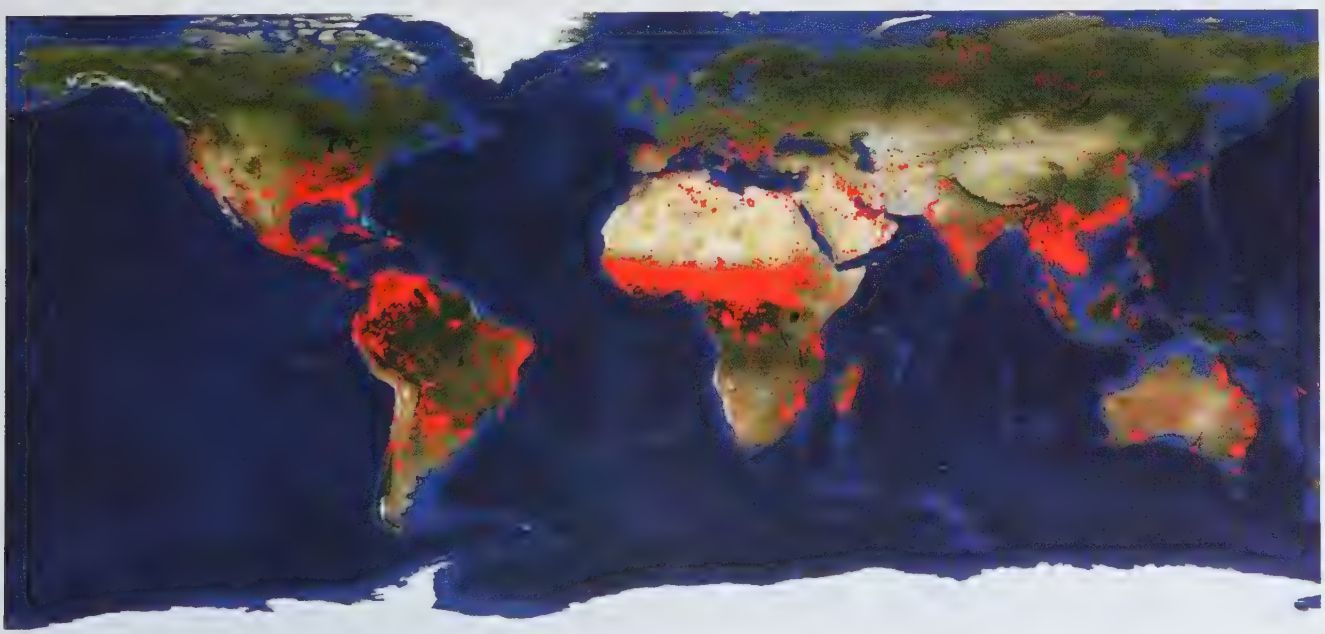
World on Fire

By January 7, 2020, wildfires had been raging in Australia for months. They had burned more than 5 million hectares (12.4 million acres), an area approximately equal to that of Prince Edward Island. Some 2000 houses had been destroyed. Twenty-four people were confirmed dead, with dozens more missing. Ecologists at the University of Sydney estimated that 480 million animals had been killed since the bush fire season had begun in September. Figure 13.1, based on NASA satellite data, shows that Australia was not unique. In early January 2020, wildfires were burning throughout the world and were especially widespread in the tropical regions of Africa, Asia, and South America.

The world was (and remains) on fire for several reasons. Poor land management is part of the problem. To cite just one Canadian example, the forestry industry routinely sprays forests with glyphosate, which destroys unprofitable hardwood species like aspen and birch and promotes the growth of profitable pine and other coniferous species. The trouble is that aspen and birch burn more slowly than evergreens. They form a natural fire barrier, as illustrated in the photo on the next page. By destroying aspen and birch for the sake of profit, glyphosate users facilitate the farther and faster spread of wildfires.

Heat does much more to facilitate the spread of wildfires by drying out forests and other combustibles. It is why tropical regions—and non-tropical regions in the summer—are especially prone to wildfires. The climate crisis greatly magnifies the problem because it is raising the world's surface temperature, particularly in the northern hemisphere (see Figure 13.2).[1] Expect more wildfires like Alberta's 2016 Fort McMurray disaster, which destroyed 4400 buildings, forced 88 000 people out of their homes, and caused nearly $10 billion in damage, making it the costliest disaster in Canadian history.

FIGURE 13.1
Wildfires Worldwide, January 7–8, 2020



Source: Fire Information for Resource Management System (2020)

James Steidle

Aftermath of the 2019 Shovel Lake wildfire in northern British Columbia. Conifers were incinerated while aspen stand tall.

Climate Change

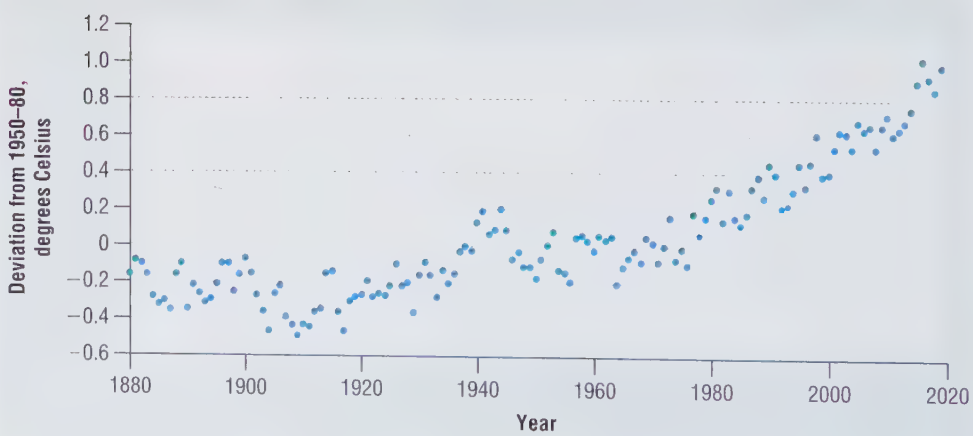
Nearly all climate scientists agree that human production of carbon dioxide is the main cause of climate change. Industries and motor vehicles, fueled largely by coal or petroleum products, release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, where the gas prevents heat from escaping, thus warming the planet. That is why carbon dioxide is widely known as a greenhouse gas. Warming causes more water to evaporate, intensifying storms and flooding. White snow and ice melt, leaving dark land to absorb more heat from the sun and raising ocean levels that threaten low-lying coastal areas. Rotting vegetable and animal matter previously under the ice releases methane gas into the atmosphere—and methane is 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide in preventing atmospheric heat loss. When carbon dioxide mixes with ocean water it creates carbonic acid, harming marine species already endangered by warming waters.

Some countries are doing a lot to cut carbon production and thus mitigate the climate crisis, with continental Western Europe leading the pack. Denmark is fast approaching the point where one-half of its energy needs will be met by renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. More than one-half of all cars in Norway are powered by electricity, 98 percent of which comes from hydro power, also a renewable energy source. Germany is on target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 95 percent by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. The governments of these countries have enacted laws, regulations, and tax incentives that encourage citizens to stop using carbon-based fuel.

Most countries in continental Western Europe were never big producers of carbon-based fuels, so relatively few interests in that region are threatened by the transition to a low-carbon economy. In contrast, many of the stockholders, executives, and employees of big petroleum, coal, and natural gas companies have tended to deny that carbon-based fuels are responsible for climate change. Their governments tend to be on board because they depend on this large bloc of people for votes and party campaign contributions and on their companies for royalties and taxes. Australia's prime minister made it clear during his country's 2019–20 inferno that he wants Australia to remain the world's largest producer of liquefied natural gas and fourth largest producer of coal, the dirtiest of carbon-based fuels. Vladimir Putin, Russia's president—whose country is the world's sixth-largest coal

FIGURE 13.2

Global Mean Temperature Based on Land and Ocean Data, 1880-2019, Measured as Deviations from the 1951–80 Average, in Degrees Celsius



Source: Goddard Institute for Space Studies (2020)

producer and third-largest oil producer, and has the world's largest proven natural gas reserves—is in the same camp. So is Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman (second largest in oil production and fifth-largest natural gas reserves), the United States' Donald Trump (number one in oil production, number three in coal production, number four in natural gas reserves), India's Narendra Modi (second in coal production), and China's Xi Jinping (whose country is responsible for nearly one-half of world coal production, making it by far the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, well ahead of the United States in second place). Canada's position lies somewhere between those of, say, Germany and the United States (see Box 13.1).

The controversy over climate change (do humans cause it?) and energy policy (how if at all should energy policy be changed?) is a debate about **political economy**. A political economist's feet may be planted in economics, political science, or sociology; researchers may approach political economy from any of these disciplinary angles. However, all political economists have in common an interest in the ways in which wealth influences power and power influences wealth. That interest lies at the centre of the debate about climate change and energy policy, and it defines the field of political economy. Accordingly, we now examine how wealth and power interact. To help you, we first define a few terms.

Political economy focuses on the way wealth influences power and power influences wealth.

BOX 13.1 Social Policy

PUBLIC POLICY: THE CANADIAN PIPELINE DEBATE

Canada's policy response to the climate crisis lies somewhere between that of continental Western Europe and that of the big producers and users of carbon-based fuel (Australia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United States, India, and China). This is perhaps unsurprising given that Canada ranks just seventh in world oil production and only thirteenth in coal production. Prime Minister Trudeau recognizes that people are responsible for climate change. He has championed a tax that (1) penalizes producers and users of carbon-based fuel (including people who use gasoline to power their cars) and (2) returns the tax collected to citizens, thus incentivizing them to adopt clean energy sources (such as electric cars). On the other hand, his government backs the construction of new oil and gas pipelines so landlocked Alberta, by far the main carbon-based fuel producing province, can more easily get oil and gas to overseas markets.

Most of the oil Alberta can't sell in Canada is now shipped to the United States, where there is an oil glut. The glut depresses the price that Alberta oil can fetch in the US market, costing oil companies and government billions of dollars a year in forgone revenue and royalties and limiting the number of jobs available in the oil patch. The problem will become more acute over the next decade (Reuters, 2013).

New pipeline routes have been proposed to relieve the glut, including one from Alberta to the British Columbia coast; one extending existing pipelines from Ontario through Québec and New Brunswick; and one extending existing pipelines from Alberta to Nebraska, from which the oil can then be piped to refineries in Louisiana. From the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts, most of the oil could be shipped to China and India.

The benefits of the proposed projects are substantial. Apart from the corporate profits, government royalties, and jobs they could generate, they could end Eastern Canada's dependence on Saudi oil, and create construction and refining jobs in Quebec and New Brunswick. However, environmental concerns are also serious. In particular, some Quebecers are skittish about transporting oil by any means, especially after the 2013 Lac-Mégantic rail disaster that killed 47 people. Americans are also worried about oil spills. The original plan routed the southern pipeline across one of the continent's largest underground water reserves. Modification of the route in response to protests largely took care of that problem, but a second objection remains: Oil sands production is especially tough on the environment. It requires much more energy and water than conventional oil production does, and it causes more pollution, including the dumping of carcinogens into the air and water systems, especially in northern Alberta, where many First Nations people reside. Many First Nations people in British Columbia and Alberta support the Western pipeline because they believe its construction holds out the promise of training, jobs, and lucrative partnerships with oil companies. Other First Nations people see the proposal to build the Western pipeline as yet another example of environmental racism, insofar as much of it will pass across First Nations territory, including river systems. They worry about damage to their land from construction and oil spills.

Critical Thinking Question

Is it possible to increase oil sands production, construct the proposed pipelines, and avoid damage to the environment? If so, how? If not, why not?

Time for Review

- Political economy is the interdisciplinary social scientific study of the ways in which wealth influences power and power influences wealth.
- The interaction of power and wealth can be clearly discerned in the debate about climate change and energy policy.

Types of Power

Power is the ability to control others, even against their will (Weber, 1947: 152). Having more power than others gives you the ability to get more valued things sooner. Having less power than others means you get fewer valued things later, if at all.

Power is exercised from above by governments and from below by such forces as political parties and social movements. **Governments** set policies—laws and regulations—that affect the creation and distribution of wealth in society. Political parties compete to form the government. Social movements challenge laws and regulations with the aim of causing change in the way wealth is created and distributed. They do so by mobilizing people to demonstrate, petition, and publicize their aims (see Chapter 18, Collective Action and Social Movements).

Governments set policies—laws and regulations—that affect the creation and distribution of wealth in society.

If government policies influence the distribution of wealth in society, then wealth helps to determine who controls government. Countless studies conducted in Canada and elsewhere demonstrate that people with relatively high income and more wealth are more likely than people with relatively low income and less wealth to vote, contribute money to political campaigns, participate in political campaigns, seek to influence their political representatives, run for office, and hold office. Money isn't everything. But it helps. As one of the twentieth-century's leading sociologists put it, "The combination of a low vote and a relative lack of organization among the lower-status groups means that they will suffer from neglect by the politicians who will be receptive to the wishes of the more privileged, participating, and organized strata" (Lipset, 1981: 226–7). No wonder higher income earners are more satisfied with Canadian democracy than are lower income earners; they get more out of it (see Figure 13.3).

Sometimes, the use of power by governments and social movements involves force. To achieve their aims, social movements may mobilize people to engage in riots or other acts of violence. Governments may command police to fire rubber bullets or soldiers to use live ammunition.

When people basically agree with the way the government is run, raw power becomes authority. **Authority** is legitimate power, that is, power that is justified in the minds of most citizens.

Authority is legitimate power, that is, power that is justified in the minds of most citizens.

FIGURE 13.3

Satisfaction with Democracy by Annual Income, Canada, 2015

Source: Compiled from Fournier, Cutler, Soroka, and Stolle (2015)

Max Weber (1947) described three bases on which authority can rest (while stressing that real-world cases often rest on varying mixes of these "ideal types"):

1. **Traditional authority.** Particularly in tribal and feudal societies, rulers inherit authority through family or clan ties. The right of a family or a clan to monopolize leadership is widely believed to derive from the will of a god.
2. **Legal-rational authority.** In modern societies, authority derives from respect for the law. Laws specify how a person can achieve office—through elections, for instance. People generally believe laws are rational. If someone achieves office by following the law, his or her authority is respected.
3. **Charismatic authority.** Sometimes, extraordinary, charismatic individuals challenge traditional or legal-rational authority. They claim to be inspired by a god or some higher principle that transcends other forms of authority. One such principle is the idea that all people are created equal. Charismatic figures sometimes emerge during a **political revolution,** an attempt by many people to overthrow existing political institutions and establish new ones. Political revolutions take place when widespread and successful movements of opposition clash with crumbling traditional or legal-rational authority.

Traditional authority, the norm in tribal and feudal societies, involves rulers inheriting authority through family or clan ties. The right of a family or clan to monopolize leadership is widely believed to derive from the will of a god.

Legal-rational authority is typical of modern societies. It derives from respect for the law. Laws specify how a person can achieve office. People generally believe laws are rational. If someone achieves office by following laws, people respect his or her authority.

Charismatic authority is based on a belief in the claims of extraordinary individuals that they are inspired by a god or some higher principle.

A **political revolution** is the overthrow of political institutions by an opposition movement and its replacement by new institutions.

People exercise power in all social settings—in intimate face-to-face relationships, families, universities and so on. However, some institutions specialize in the exercise of power. These institutions form the state. The **state** comprises institutions that formulate and carry out a country's laws and public policies. The main state institutions are the executive branch (responsible for initiating and enforcing laws), the legislature (responsible for passing laws), and the judiciary (responsible for interpreting laws). In performing these functions, the state regulates citizens in civil society. **Civil society** consists of areas of social life that are organized by individuals and groups beyond the direct control of the state. Families, businesses, political parties, social movements, and the mass media are all part of civil society.

The **state** consists of the institutions responsible for formulating and carrying out a country's laws and public policies.

Civil society is the private sphere of social life.

In turn, citizens in civil society influence the state—to varying degrees. In **authoritarian states,** citizen control is sharply restricted. In a **totalitarian state,** it is virtually nonexistent. In a **democracy,** citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over the state. They do this partly by choosing representatives in regular, competitive elections. **Liberal democracies** like Canada enjoy the highest level of citizen influence over the state. Not only do they hold regular, competitive elections, but they also protect the rights of minorities, ensure that each of the main branches of government can restrain the power of the other branches, protect freedom of the press and other media, and so on.

Authoritarian states sharply restrict citizen control of the state.

In a **totalitarian state**, citizens lack almost any control of the state.

In a **democracy**, citizens exercise a relatively high degree of control over the state. They do so mainly by choosing representatives in regular, competitive elections.

Between 1972 and 1999, liberal democracy was on the rise in most of the world, as Figure 13.4 shows. Since then, the advance of liberal democracy has stalled and by some measures declined. On a broader canvas, stretching from 1828 to the present, a cyclical pattern is evident, with the twenty-first century ushering in a period of decline in liberal democracy (see Figure 13.5). We explain the recent decline later.

Sources of Power in Democracies: A Conflict Theory Approach

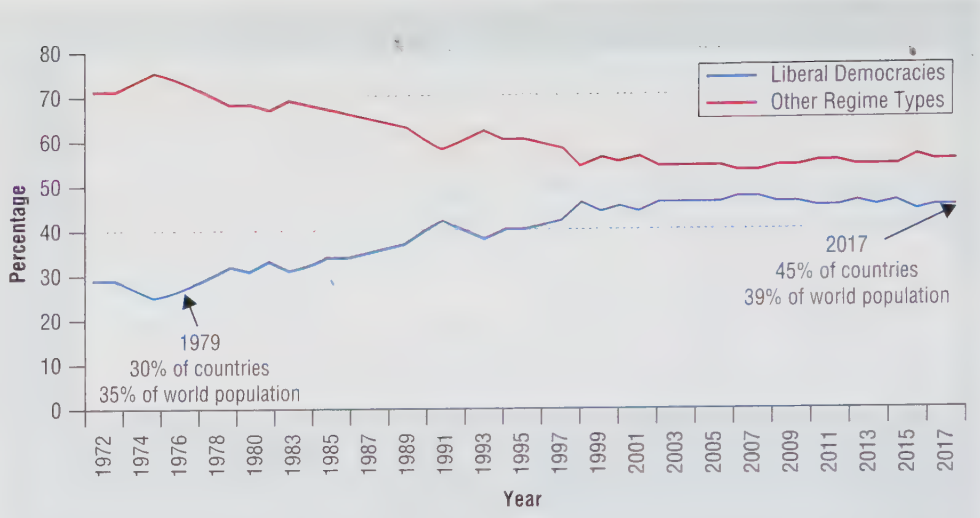
Wealth is an exceedingly important source of power, but it is by no means the only source. Conflict theorists—especially those who refer to themselves as "political resource theorists"—also emphasize the significance of *social organization* in determining who wields power in democratic societies. We can illustrate their thinking by considering how political parties get to form governments.

Consider your own party preference first. For many reasons, you may support one political party over another. Your family may have a long tradition of voting for one party. You may have never really questioned this support. Maybe you support a party because you admire the energy, integrity, or track record of its leader or simply think she is the least objectionable of the lot. Or you might support a party because you agree with its policies on a range of issues.

If a party's policies influence your vote, you are like many Canadians. In fact, Canadian voters cluster into two main policy groups. Voters on the *left* promote extensive government involvement in the economy. Among other things, they favour a strong "social safety net" of

FIGURE 13.4

Liberal Democracies and Other Regime Types as a Percentage of All Countries, 1972–2017



Sources: Adapted from Freedom House (2018); Gastil (1979)

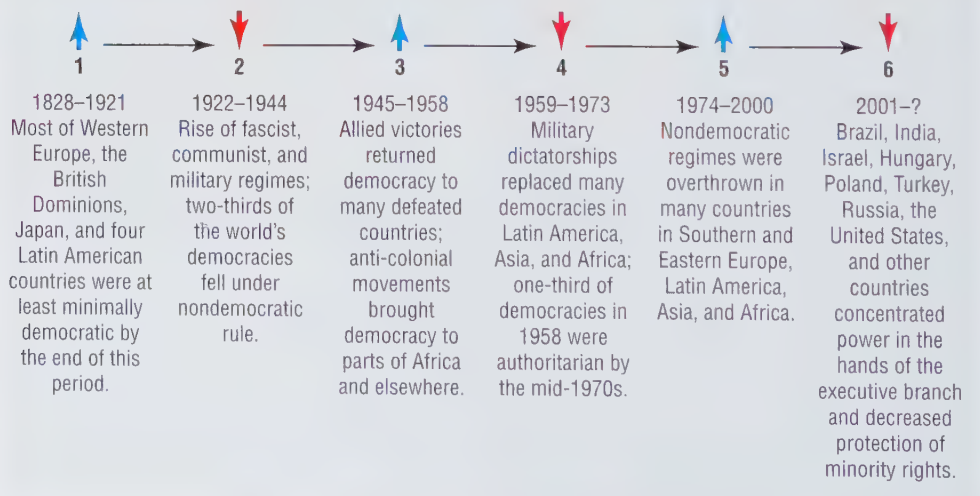
Liberal democracies like Canada enjoy the highest level of citizen control over the state. Not only do they hold regular, competitive elections; they also protect the rights of minorities, ensure that each of the main branches of government (legislature, executive and judiciary) can restrain the power of the other branches, protect freedom of the press and other media, and so on.

health and welfare benefits to help the less fortunate members of society. Left-wing policies often lead to less economic inequality. In contrast, voters on the *right* favour a reduced role for government in the economy. They want to see a smaller welfare state and emphasize the importance of individual initiative in promoting economic growth. Economic issues aside, leftists and rightists also tend to differ on social or moral issues. Leftists tend to support equal rights for women and racial and sexual minorities. Rightists tend to support more traditional social and moral values.

Figure 13.6 shows one indicator of how left and right sentiments translated into support for Canada's four main political parties in 2015. Using data from the Canadian Election Survey of that year, we first calculated, for supporters of each party, the percentage of people who favour corporate tax cuts. Favouring corporate tax cuts is one indicator of the percentage of people on the right. We then found the percentage of people who support more federal spending on welfare. Supporting more federal spending on welfare is one indicator of the percentage of people on the left. Finally, we subtracted the percentage on the left from the percentage on the right. This difference is what we call the "left–right index." The

FIGURE 13.5

Democratic Cycles


1
1828–1921
Most of Western Europe, the British Dominions, Japan, and four Latin American countries were at least minimally democratic by the end of this period.
2
1922–1944
Rise of fascist, communist, and military regimes; two-thirds of the world's democracies fell under nondemocratic rule.
3
1945–1958
Allied victories returned democracy to many defeated countries; anti-colonial movements brought democracy to parts of Africa and elsewhere.
4
1959–1973
Military dictatorships replaced many democracies in Latin America, Asia, and Africa; one-third of democracies in 1958 were authoritarian by the mid-1970s.
5
1974–2000
Nondemocratic regimes were overthrown in many countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.
6
2001–?
Brazil, India, Israel, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, Russia, the United States, and other countries concentrated power in the hands of the executive branch and decreased protection of minority rights.

Sources: Adapted from Brym (2019); Huntington (1991); Diamond (1996)

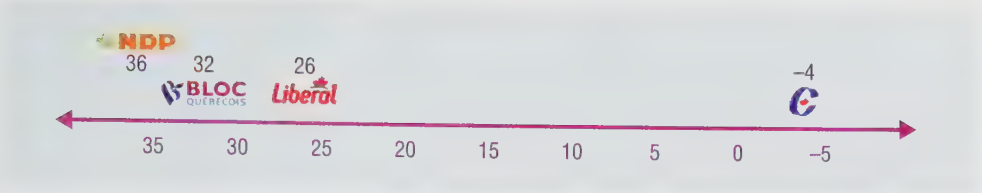


FIGURE 13.6
Left versus Right, Canadian Federal Parties, 2015

Note: The left–right index is the percentage of each party's supporters who favoured corporate tax cuts minus the percentage who favoured more federal spending on welfare.
Source: Compiled from Fournier, Cutler, Soroka, and Stolle (2015)

higher the value of the left–right index, the more left-wing a party is. From this point of view, supporters of Canada's main political parties differ. Supporters of the Conservatives are farthest to the right. Supporters of the Liberals are left of centre. Bloc Québécois and New Democratic Party supporters are farthest to the left.

The policies favoured by different parties have diverse effects on different categories of people. Therefore, different parties tend to be supported by different classes, regions, religious communities, races, and other groups. In most Western democracies, one of the main factors distinguishing political parties is differences in class support.

In a given election, the tendency for people to vote for parties depends on many factors, including the popularity of party leaders, the extent to which parties have been rocked by scandal, the constellation of voters to whom different party platforms appeal, and so on. Over many elections, however, one of the most important factors determining who votes for which party is the extent to which classes are socially organized or cohesive.

For instance, just four days before Canada's 1988 "free-trade election," a survey showed that 54 percent of Canadians opposed free trade with the United States and just 35 percent supported it. Then, an organization called the Canadian Alliance for Trade and Job Opportunities (CATJO) suddenly swung into high gear with a massive media blitz aimed at convincing Canadians of the benefits of free trade with the United States. Its sole sponsor was the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI), an organization comprising the CEOs of 150 of Canada's biggest corporations. The media campaign worked. On election day, the pro-free trade party (the Conservatives) won in a surprising turnaround (Richardson, 1996). This event illustrates that an upper class that is able and willing to create social organizations like CATJO and BCNI is more powerful than an upper class that is unable or unwilling to take such action. If an upper class makes such efforts while a working class fails to organize itself, right-leaning candidates have a better chance of winning office. Conservative policies are more likely to become law.

Similarly, a working class that can unionize many workers is more powerful than one with few unionized workers. That is because unions often collect money for the party that is more sympathetic to union interests. Unions also lobby on behalf of their members and try to convince their members to vote for the most pro-union party. If workers become more unionized while an upper class fails to organize itself, then left-wing candidates have an improved chance of winning office. In this situation, policies that favour lower classes are more likely to become law. This is one of the main insights of power resource theory: Organization is a source of power. Change in the distribution of power between major classes partly accounts for the fortunes of different political parties and different laws and policies over the long term (O'Connor and Olsen, 1998).

You can see how power resource theory works by examining Table 13.1, which divides 18 industrialized democracies in the three decades after World War II into three groups. In group one we find countries like Sweden, where democratic socialist parties usually controlled government. (Democratic socialist parties are at least as left-leaning as the NDP in Canada.) In group two are countries like Australia, where democratic socialist parties sometimes controlled, or shared control of, government. In group three are countries like Canada, where democratic socialist parties rarely or never shared control of government. The group averages in column one show that democratic socialist parties are generally more successful in countries where more workers are unionized. The group averages in columns

TABLE 13.1

Some Consequences of Working-Class Power in 18 Rich Industrialized Countries, 1946–76

	Percentage Non-agricultural Workers Unionized	Percentage of National Income to Top 10% of Earners	Percentage Poor
Mainly democratic socialist countries (Sweden, Norway)	68.5	21.8	4.3
Partly democratic socialist countries (Austria, Australia, Denmark, Belgium, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Finland)	46.6	23.6	7.8
Mainly non-democratic socialist countries (Ireland, West Germany, Netherlands, United States, Japan, Canada, France, Italy, Switzerland)	28.0	28.3	10.8

Note: "Percentage poor" is the average percentage of the population living in relative poverty according to OECD standards, with the poverty line standardized according to household size.

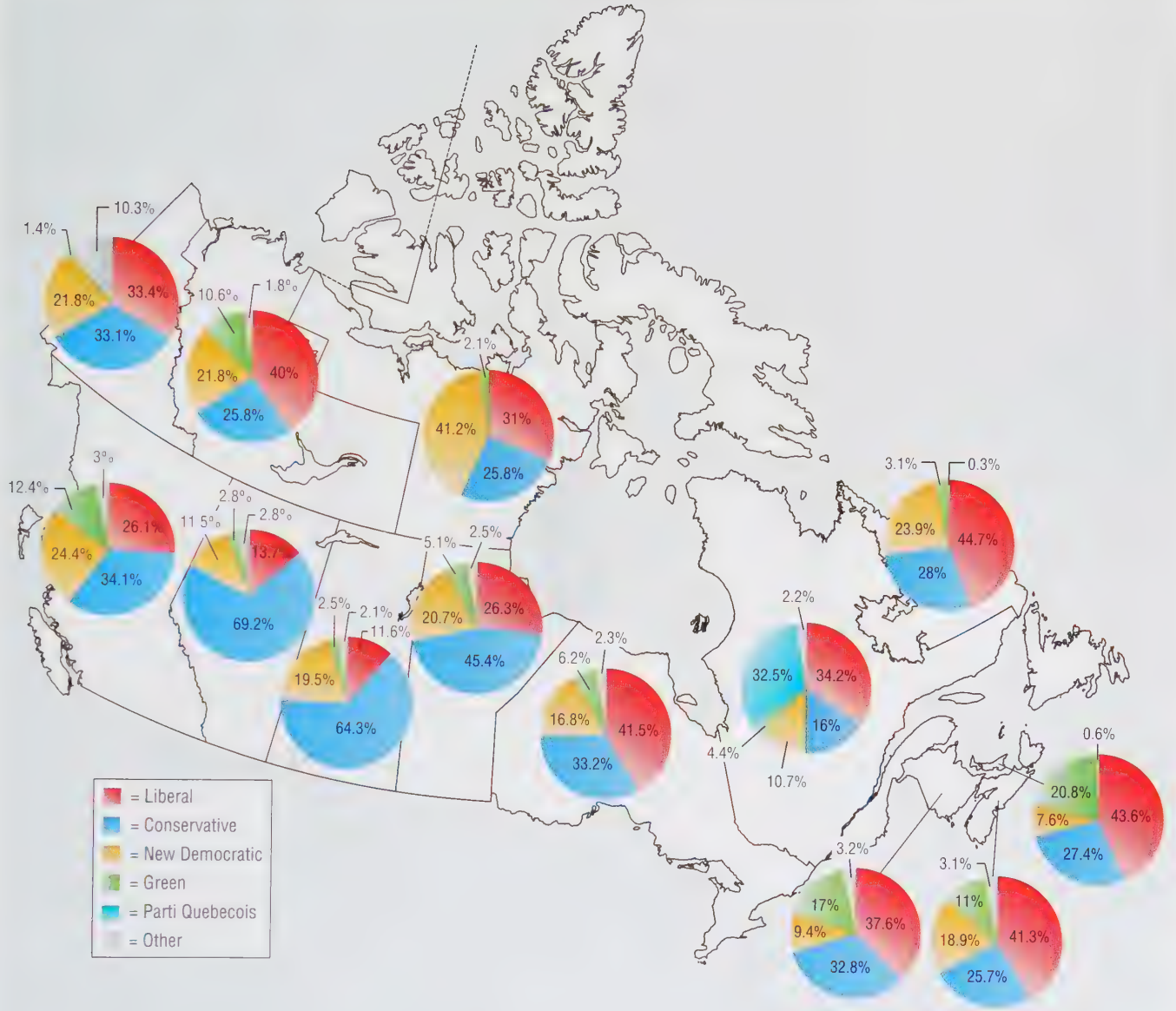
Source: Compiled from Korpi (1983: 40, 196)

two and three show more economic inequality exists in countries that are weakly unionized. In other words, by means of taxes and social policies, democratic socialist governments ensure that people who are rich earn a smaller percentage of national income and people who are poor form a smaller percentage of the population. Studies of pensions, medical care, and other state benefits in the rich industrialized democracies reach similar conclusions. In general, where working classes are more organized and powerful, disadvantaged people are economically better off (Lindert, 2004).

Class is not the only factor that distinguishes political parties. Moreover, the strength of the tendency for people in different classes to vote for different parties varies from one country to the next. In Canada, for example, the tendency is relatively weak. In contrast, the tendency for people in different *regions* to vote for different parties is strong. Thus, as Figure 13.7 shows, in the 2019 federal election, the Conservatives predominated west of Ontario. The Liberals predominated east and north of Manitoba. The Parti Québécois rivaled the Liberals in Quebec. The strength of regional divisions in Canada is a major reason why voting along class lines is weak in this country and why, unlike many other democracies, Canada has never had a democratic-socialist government.

Time for Review

- Power is exercised from above by governments and from below by such forces as political parties and social movements.
- People with relatively high income and more wealth are more likely than people with relatively low income and less wealth to influence government policymaking.
- Political systems are characterized by the prevalent type of authority and the degree to which civil society influences government.
- Political change occurs as the power of some population categories (for example, classes and regions) increases or decreases.



Source: CBC News (2019b); Statista (2019)

FIGURE 13.7
Percentage of Vote by Region and Party, 2019 Canadian Federal Election

Labour Market Challenges

Markets are social relations that regulate the exchange of goods and services. The market price of any commodity (including labour) is determined by supply (the amount of the commodity that is available), demand (how much the commodity is wanted), and degree of regulation (the extent to which governments intervene to control supply and demand). Completely unregulated or "free" markets do not exist. Thus, in Canada we have laws against child labour, limits on the length of the workday, obligatory vacations, a legislated minimum wage, and rules concerning worker safety.

Researchers, politicians, and members of the public often debate whether the Canadian labour market is too free or not free enough—whether the government is too heavy-handed or too hands-off. The following discussion will help you form an opinion on that subject, which deeply affects the lives of all Canadians.

Markets are social relations that regulate the exchange of goods and services. The market price of any commodity (including labour) is determined by supply (the amount of the commodity that is available), demand (how much the commodity is wanted), and degree of regulation (the extent to which governments intervene to control supply and demand).

"Good" and "Bad" Jobs

People often distinguish good from bad jobs. Bad jobs pay poorly and require workers to perform routine tasks under close supervision in unpleasant and in some cases dangerous conditions. Only good jobs typically require higher education. They pay well. Workers are not closely supervised. They are encouraged to be creative. They work in pleasant surroundings. Good jobs offer secure employment, opportunities for promotion, and other significant benefits such as a company pension. In a bad job, workers can easily be fired, they receive few if any benefits, and opportunities for promotion are scarce.

In Canada, the number of good jobs is growing but the number of bad jobs is growing faster. Economists at CIBC, Canada's fifth-largest bank by assets, regularly produce a job quality index

An unregulated market creates gross inequalities. Here is an account of a wife sold by her husband for sixpence in Britain in 1823. Similar events inspired Thomas Hardy's classic novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886).

ACCOUNT OF THE

SALE of a WIFE, by J. NASH,

IN THOMAS-STREET MARKET,

On the 29th of May, 1823.

This day another of those disgraceful scenes which of late have so frequently annoyed the public markets in this country took place in St. Thomas's Market, in this city; a man (if he deserves the name) of the name of John Nash, a drover, residing in Rosemary-street, appeared there leading his wife in a halter, followed by a great concourse of spectators; when arrived opposite the Bell-yard, he publicly announced his intention of disposing of his better half by Public Auction, and stated that the biddings were then open; it was a long while before any one ventured to speak, at length a young man who thought it a pity to let her remain in the hands of her present owner, generously bid 6d.! In vain did the anxious seller look around for another bidding, no one could be found to advance one penny, and after extolling her qualities, and warranting her sound, and free from vice, he was obliged, rather than keep her, to let her go at that price. The lady appeared quite satisfied, but not so the purchaser, he soon repented of his bargain, and again offered her to sale, when being bid nine-pence, he readily accepted it, and handed the lady to her new purchaser, who, not liking the transfer, made off with her mother, but was soon taken by her purchaser, and claimed as his property, to this she would not consent but by order of a magistrate, who dismissed the case. Nash, the husband, was obliged to make a precipitate retreat from the enraged populace.

Copy of Verses written on the Occasion:

COME all you kind husbands who have scolding wives,
Who thro' living together are tired of your lives,
If you cannot persuade her nor good nature'd make her
Place a rope round her neck & to market pray take her

Should any one bid, when she's offer'd for sale,
Let her go for a trifle lest she should get male,
If six-pence be offer'd, & that's all can be had,
Let her go for the same rather than keep a lot bad.

Come all jolly neighbours, come dance sing & play,
Away to the wedding where we intend to drink tea;
All the world assembles, the young and the old,
For to see this fair beauty, as we have been told.

Here's success to this couple to keep up the fun,
May bumpers go round at the birth of a son;
Long life to them both, and in peace & content
May their days and their nights for ever be spent.

Shepherd, Printer, No. 6, on the Broad Weir, Bristol.

that takes account of part-time work, self-employment, and industry of employment. It shows that the average quality of work has been declining in Canada since 1990. Thus, between 2018 and 2019, the number of jobs in low-paying industries increased 3.2 percent while the number of jobs in high-paying industries increased 0.2 percent. Between 1997 and 2018, the share of jobs paying below the average wage rose about 3 percent. Between 2005 and 2019, wage gains were lowest in low-paying industries and highest in high-paying industries (Tal, 2019). Deterioration in the quality of work is also evident in the rise of part-time employment.

Part-Time Work

The proportion of part-time workers in the Canadian labour force more than doubled between 1976 and 2019. In 2019, 12.9 percent of men and 25.6 percent of women worked part-time (Statistics Canada, 2020b). The growth of part-time work is one aspect of the declining quality of work insofar as most part-time workers have bad jobs as defined earlier.

Not that the expansion of part-time work is a serious problem in itself. Some part-time jobs are good jobs as defined here. Some people prefer to work part-time and can afford to do so. However, according to Statistics Canada research, just 28 percent of part-time workers say they work part-time as a matter of personal preference rather than necessity. Twenty-nine percent of part-time workers go to school. A considerable number of students work to support the cost of their education while some work to help their family financially. Twenty-four percent work part-time for other economic reasons—for example, they need money to put food on the table but can't find full-time jobs. Nine percent (mainly women) say they work part-time so they can take care of their young children. The remaining 10 percent of part-time workers work part-time due to illness or disability, because they must care for elderly parents, or because of other personal or family responsibilities (Patterson, 2018).

Much of the growth of part-time work is a result of Canada's labour market being relatively free. Employers have in many cases replaced full-time workers with several part-timers to lower the employer's cost of obligatory benefits. Companies like Uber have pioneered the so-called gig economy, which involves short-term employment with little or no regulation of hours, wages, and days off and little or no obligation of the company to pay employee benefits. Much part-time work is precarious in the sense that it is unsteady and unpredictable. It is the absence of stronger state support for higher education, child care, and elder care, and the absence of regulations requiring part-time workers to receive benefits proportionate to those of full-time workers, that is juicing the growth of the part-time labour force.

Automation

There is a lot of churn in the labour market. New jobs are created, some jobs disappear, some people learn new skills to adapt to the changing demands of work, others don't. Much research shows that in Canada and other countries, automation is the main cause of job loss in recent decades (Royal Bank of Canada, 2017).

Automation, including the use of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI), is galloping up the stratification system. Most skilled and semi-skilled workers on, say, automobile assembly lines have already been replaced by robots. (As science fiction writer Isaac Asimov wrote in the mid-twentieth century, the factory of the future will employ only one man and one dog. The man will be there to feed the dog, and the dog will be there to keep the man away from the robots.) Truck drivers are beginning to be replaced by self-driving vehicles, and buildings are already being constructed by 3D printers and robots. In coming decades, we can expect to see automation in places now largely foreign to them, such as doctor's offices and hospitals. Face2Gene, a free app available for iPhone and Android, can identify rare genetic disorders by taking a photo of a person's face. In one test on 10 children with "fairly recognizable" genetic syndromes, the app was pitted against 49 clinical geneticists. Two of the 49 geneticists diagnosed more than five of the children correctly based on a single photo of their face. The app correctly diagnosed 7 of the 10 children (Houser, 2019). A new Google AI system scanned 91 000 mammograms, learning how to read them to detect breast cancer. Compared to expert radiologists' readings, the AI system reduced false negatives between 1.2 percent and

Imaginechina Limited/Alamy

A house made by a 3D printer

5.7 percent, and false positives between 2.7 percent and 9.4 percent (Mehta, 2020).

The important question is not whether automation will continue to eliminate and change jobs. Of course it will. The important questions are how many and what kinds of jobs will be eliminated or changed, how fast will the change take place, and what can government do to help ease the transformation of the labour force?

The "end of work" forecast by some observers is nowhere in sight. Although we can't know the future, government social scientists have extrapolated current trends and concluded that in 2026, roughly 60 percent of new jobs will require a postsecondary education. The jobs least in demand will include fishing, farming, mining, logging, and manufacturing (see Table 13.2). By 2030, around 40 percent to 50 percent of Canadian jobs will have to adapt to automation, about 30 percent significantly. By 2035 or 2040, automation will eliminate more than 10 percent of the jobs that exist today (Canada News Wire, 2018; Canadian Press, 2020b; Wills Towers Watson, 2018).

Significantly, of the approximately 640 000 job vacancies in Canada in 2020, about two-thirds were vacant for more than six months. The existence of so many long-term job vacancies is evidence of a mismatch between the skills of the Canadian labour force and the needs of the job market. It points to the ineffectiveness of market forces alone in creating jobs for Canadians (Tencer, 2018). Given the coming wave of automation and the restructuring and elimination of jobs that it will entail, the problem is likely to worsen unless government policy steps up to help rectify it—especially for women, who make up 54 of the jobs that are at greatest risk of being eliminated by automation (Naidu-Ghelani, 2019).

TABLE 13.2

Projected Job Vacancies, Canada, 2026 (in percent)

Source: Government of Canada (2017)

By Level of Education	Percent
Occupations that usually require university education	25.6
Occupations that usually require college or vocational education or apprenticeship training	37.6
Occupations that usually require secondary school and/or occupation-specific training	27.0
Occupations for which on-the-job training is usually provided	9.7
Total	100.0
By Sector	
Sales and service occupations	23.4
Business, finance, and administration occupations	18.3
Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations	15.2
Occupations in education, law, and social, community, and government services	13.1
Health occupations	10.2
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	9.4
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	5.4
Occupations in art, culture, recreation, and sport	2.7
Natural resources, agriculture, and related production occupations	2.2
Total	100.0

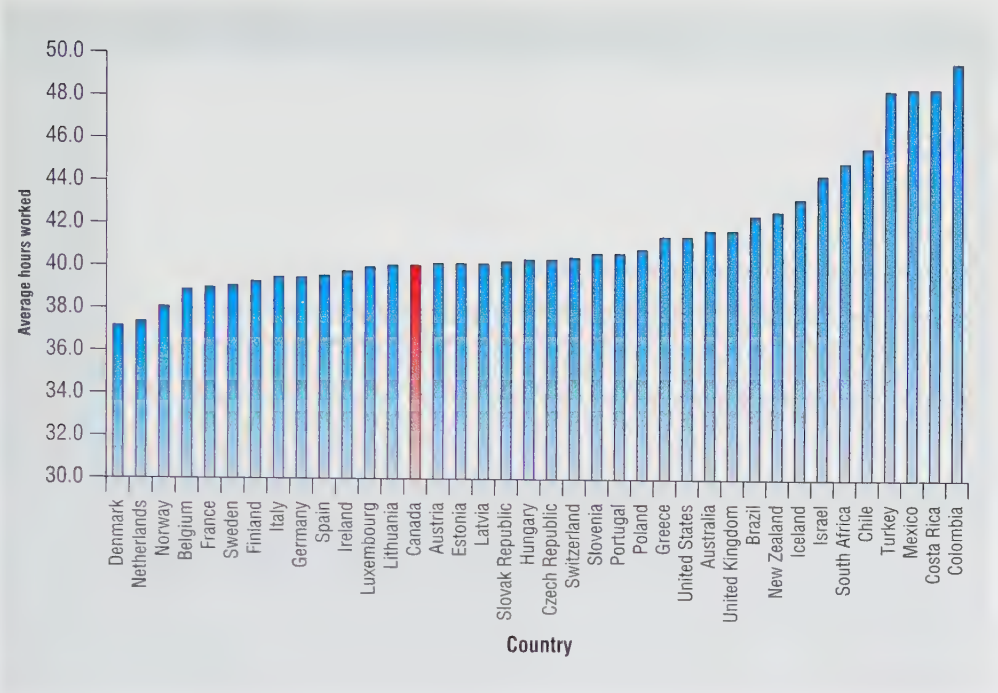


FIGURE 13.8
Average Number of Hours Worked, Full-Time Workers, by Country, 2018

Source: OECD (2020a); Statistics Canada (2020a)

The Danes provide an instructive model of how the problem might be handled. In Denmark, representatives of government, industry, unions, and postsecondary education collaborate to determine the kinds of job skills that are likely to be in high demand in the near future. The government gives people who lose jobs generous unemployment benefits for a couple of years and organizes programs that retrain them for skilled jobs that are in high demand, requiring that they complete such a program as a condition of receiving benefits (Andersen, 2017). These policies help explain why Denmark's unemployment rate was 2.2 percentage points lower than Canada's in November 2019.

Denmark is an instructive case for a second reason. As Figure 13.8 shows, Denmark's average number of hours worked weekly by full-time workers is the lowest in the world (37.1 hours). Lowering the average number of hours worked weekly by full-time workers requires more workers to be hired to do the same amount of work. And it has the added benefit of increasing worker productivity and creating a happier work force. We know this from experiments conducted in several countries. When Microsoft Japan tested a four-day work week, productivity jumped 40 percent (Spicer, 2020). Collective Campus, an Australian innovation accelerator, introduced a six-hour workday and found it "forced the team to prioritize effectively, limit interruptions, and operate at a much more deliberate level for the first few hours of the day. The team maintained, and in some cases increased, its quantity and quality of work, with people reporting an improved mental state, and that they had more time for rest, family, friends, and other endeavors" (Glaveski, 2018). Similar results were achieved in Gothenburg, Sweden, when 70 assistant nurses had their workdays shortened to six hours (Savage, 2017). In an era when significant job loss can be expected because of automation, shortening the work week and hiring more workers to make up the shortfall seems something of a no-brainer, especially when it has beneficial effects on worker productivity and satisfaction.

Time for Review

- The degree to which markets are free or constrained by government regulation is a key factor influencing the proportion of good and bad jobs in society. Relatively free markets encourage the kind of cost-cutting that results in the proliferation of bad jobs, including part-time work and jobs in the gig economy.
- Automation has eliminated many jobs, beginning with routine jobs and now, thanks to artificial intelligence, extending to more creative jobs. One of the main issues facing all societies is how to transition to a society in which much work requires little human intervention.

Political Challenges

In addition to labour market challenges, we face serious challenges to democracy in the coming decades that deserve our attention. We review two of them now.

Populism

Populists tend to be anti-immigration, pro-capitalist, and authoritarian.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, support for populist parties has grown strongly in many countries (glance back at Figure 9.2 to see the level of support for populist parties in 35 European and North American countries). **Populists** tend to be anti-immigration, pro-capitalist, and authoritarian. They favour a society that is predominantly White and Christian. They prefer governments that concentrate power in the hands of one man yet refrain from using that power to provide citizens with comprehensive health, welfare and educational services. Instead, they prefer to leave such matters to privately owned businesses. Populist leaders typically enjoy a privileged background. Nonetheless, they often call their opponents "elites," by which they mean urban, relatively well-educated individuals who are presumably out of touch with the needs and demands of "the people," whom they claim to represent.

The world's best-known and most powerful populist is Donald Trump, elected President of the United States in 2016. Although he describes himself as a "stable genius" and self-made man, six of his businesses have declared bankruptcy despite Trump having been gifted at least $413 million in today's US dollars from his father, mainly through dubious tax dodges (Associated Press, 2018; Lee, 2016).

The rise of populism stretches the sociological imagination, but not because privileged White men have been elected to high office in North America and elsewhere. That pattern has been the norm since elections were first held. (One wag called democracy "government of the people, by the lawyers, for the businessmen.") What is surprising is that so many people support populist leaders. Which people? According to surveys conducted in many countries, people who feel threatened economically and culturally (Brym, 2016; Inglehart and Norris, 2017).

Their insecurity is largely a product of the intensification of globalization that began nearly half a century ago. In the late 1970s, governments under pressure from large multinational corporations began to lower barriers to international trade and investment. Canada's 1989 free trade deal with the United States (joined by Mexico in 1994) was part of this wave. However, to become more profitable, manufacturers soon began shutting down plants in relatively high-wage countries like Canada and the United States and opening up new plants in relatively low-wage countries like Mexico and China. The results were dramatic. In 1965, manufacturing accounted for about 23 percent of Canada's gross domestic product. Today, the figure is barely 10 percent (Clarke and Couture, 2017; Janzen, 2017).

Free trade yielded benefits for some Canadians—especially highly educated professionals and owners and some employees of big businesses. At the same time, it produced disadvantages for others—especially workers whose well-paying, full-time

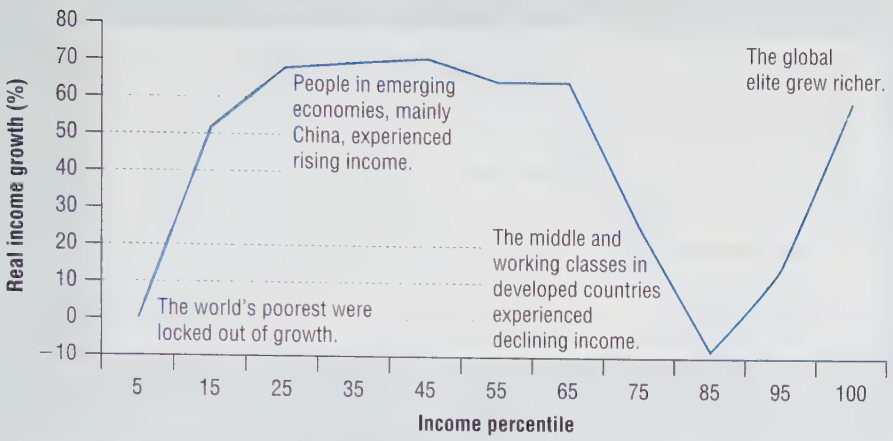


FIGURE 13.9
Global Income Change, 1988–2008

Source: Lakner, Christoph, and Branko Milanovic, "Global income distribution: From the fall of the Berlin Wall to the Great Recession." VOX CEPR Policy Portal, 27 May (2014)

manufacturing jobs with pension and other benefits were replaced by lower-paying part-time jobs with fewer benefits. Figure 13.9 summarizes one effect of globalization from 1988 to 2008. On average over those two decades of rapid economic growth, and taking inflation into account, the world's poorest people saw no change in their annual income. People in emerging economies, mainly China, saw their annual income increase by a whopping 70 percent. The middle and working classes in developed countries like Canada saw their annual income drop by close to 10 percent. Meanwhile, the annual income of the world's wealthiest people increased by about 60 percent.

Among those hurt by globalization, resentment smoldered. They often directed their upset against the beneficiaries of globalization and/or recent immigrants. Of course, immigrants were not responsible for globalization and its labour force effects. In fact, immigrants created many jobs in the countries where they settled. However, they were convenient scapegoats; some majority-group members viewed them as culturally dangerous. Leaders of populist movements and parties recruited most of their followers from the ranks of such angry people (see Box 13.2).

As globalization picked up, all eyes turned to China, whose government created conditions leading to unprecedented economic growth beginning in the late 1970s. Among other policies, the government allowed foreign corporations to establish manufacturing plants on Chinese soil. This change not only pleased the executives of Western corporations, who increased profits by hiring inexpensive Chinese labour, but also delighted Western consumers, who benefited from low prices on a wide range of manufactured goods. However, in exchange for these benefits, the Chinese government demanded and got access to the technology in the new plants. A massive technology transfer ensued, boosting Chinese economic growth. China now sells far more to the rest of the world than the rest of the world sells to China, and it lends trillions of dollars to the West, intensifying the buying binge.

It took Donald Trump, the populist president of the United States, to act against China's enormous trade surplus and its technological great leap forward. He enacted policies to bring manufacturing industries back to the United States and halt the flow of technology out of the country. Then, when COVID-19 hit, Trump blamed China for the pandemic and redoubled his efforts to free the United States from heavy dependence on its Asian rival.

The COVID-19 pandemic had similar economic effects on many other countries, including Canada. It forced countries to limit international travel and it disrupted international supply chains, demonstrating the downside of dependence on external suppliers. Even ventilators, test kits, personal protective equipment, and medicines needed to fight COVID-19 were for the most part manufactured elsewhere, often in China. As a result, globalization stalled as countries sought to become more economically autonomous.

BOX 13.2 Sociology and the Media

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HELPED TRUMP WIN

In 2012, an article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* reported that 58 000 volunteers had provided researchers with their demographic profiles and gave them access to their Facebook likes and dislikes (Kosinski, Stillwell, and Graepel, 2012). The researchers showed they could accurately predict personality characteristics and personal attributes, including political party preferences, from the Facebook data. They claimed that, based on 10 Facebook likes per person, they could know more about someone's personality than her average work colleague knows. With 300 likes per person, they could know more about her than her intimate partner knows. And with still more likes, their knowledge could exceed what she thinks she knows about herself. For the first time, it appeared possible to link demographic, voting, and other objective data with psychographic profiles of individuals on a mass scale. Campaigners could now appeal to voters based not just on their presumed interests but on their self-identified preferences and emotional states.

A few years later, data scientists hired to work on Donald Trump's presidential campaign latched onto the new technology. Chief among them was Alexander Nix, CEO of Cambridge Analytica. The day Trump was elected president, Nix issued a press release that read in part: "We are thrilled that our revolutionary approach to data-driven communication has played such an integral part in President-elect Trump's extraordinary win" (quoted in Grassegger and Krogerus, 2017).

Nix boasted that he had built a database consisting of 5000 data points for each adult in the United States. While this was likely an exaggeration (Facebook later conceded that Cambridge Analytica had gained access to personal data on 87 million Facebook users), it is true that Cambridge Analytica used the data to customize tweets and Facebook ads that played on the self-proclaimed anxieties and desires of every person in the database. They helped convince a considerable number of people either to vote for Trump or stay at home on election day rather than vote for his opponent, Hillary Clinton. For example, an ad sent to Haitian voters in Miami dwelt on the alleged failures of the charitable Clinton Foundation following the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince. It led a considerable number of Haitian Americans not to vote, helping Florida swing to Trump.

Overall, the Clinton campaign spent 46 percent more money than the Trump campaign did. However, it lagged badly in the extent and sophistication of digital operations. For instance, the Clinton campaign ran 66 000 ads on Facebook; the Trump campaign ran 5.9 million customized ads. At its height, the Trump campaign was spending US$70 million a month on digital operations. More creative, invasive, and better organized digitally, it ensured that enough Americans were influenced by digital operations to hand Trump a shocking, narrow victory (Brym, Slavina, Todosijevic, and Cowan, 2018; *The Great Hack*, 2019).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How do social media threaten democracy in ways not considered in this box?
2. What steps can be taken to prevent social media from threatening democracy?

Women in Politics

In 2019, then environment minister Catherine McKenna was walking down a street with her young children when a car pulled up beside them. The driver rolled down his window and shouted, "F--k you, Climate Barbie!" He then sped off. This was not an isolated incident. One morning, McKenna arrived at her campaign office to find "C--t" scrawled across the front window in red paint. She regularly receives emails containing sexualized insults and threats. One message expressed the hope that she and her children get fatal diseases. Harassment has now reached the point where McKenna sometimes requires a security detail, a rarity for Canadian cabinet ministers (Canadian Press, 2019).

Sexist attacks on McKenna continued in 2020, when a man tried to get into her Ottawa constituency office and called her a "c—t" when he was denied entry due to COVID-19 precautions ("Police Launch Hate Crime Investigation," 2020). Nor is she the only woman in politics treated this way. A 2018 survey of 81 European female members of Parliament found that nearly 70 percent had been the target of comments related to their physical appearance or based on gender stereotypes, 60 percent had been the target of online sexist attacks on social networks, nearly 50 percent had received death threats or threats of rape or beating, and nearly 15 percent had suffered physical violence (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2018). It would be bad enough if it was only errant members of the public who attacked female politicians in this way, but some fellow parliamentarians join in. A young Australian comedian was raped and killed on her way home from a gig one

Sean Kilpatrick/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Catherine McKenna speaks in the House of Commons, 2019

night in 2019, following which a parliamentary debate took place on the need for extra protection for women. A female member of Parliament rose to say women wouldn't need extra protection if men didn't rape them, at which point a senior male senator shouted, "You should stop shagging men, Sarah!" (Mao, 2019). Despite the ensuing uproar, he later refused to apologize.

Persistent harassment and sexist attacks constitute only one reason why more women don't enter politics. In addition, Canada and other countries have a long history of erecting legal and economic barriers to keep women out.

During the first half century of Canada's existence, the law allowed only men to vote. By demonstrating, petitioning, and gaining the support of influential liberal-minded men, Canadian women finally won the right to vote federally in 1917 and in Yukon and all provinces except Québec by 1925. Québec fell into line in 1940 and the Northwest Territories in 1951. In 1921, Agnes Macphail became the first woman elected to Canada's Parliament. As of 2019, women represented 27 percent of members of Parliament, with most of the increase taking place before the late 1990s. Only once, for a mere five months in 1993, has Canada had a female prime minister (Kim Campbell) (Bashevkin, 1993; Equal Voice, 2005).

Economic barriers to participating in political life are daunting. Running for office requires time and money. Women are disadvantaged in this regard because, as you saw in Chapter 11, Sexualities and Gender Stratification, women have, on average, lower socioeconomic status than men do. Women are also saddled with more domestic responsibilities than men are. These factors prevent many women from running for office. In addition, political parties influence the nomination of candidates for elected office and thus help determine where women run. Most parties tend to assign female candidates to ridings where their chances of winning are low (Brodie, 1991).

Feminist sociologists have made intelligent policy suggestions on how to lower barriers to female political participation (Boyd, 2014). For example, laws could be passed that would allow candidates to take unpaid leave from their jobs to contest nominations and elections, set spending limits for nomination and election campaigns, make contributions for nomination campaigns tax-deductible, and treat child-care and housekeeping costs as reimbursable campaign expenses. Additionally, laws could be enacted that make government subsidies to political party campaigns contingent on the proportion of their elected candidates who are women. In such a system, party subsidies would increase with the proportion of women elected, thus creating a powerful disincentive for parties to place most female candidates in ridings where they are likely to lose.

Political leadership also plays a role in mobilizing women for political roles. You may be surprised to discover that, as of 2020, the countries with the highest percentage of women in their parliaments are Rwanda (61 percent), Cuba and Bolivia (53 percent), and Mexico (48 percent). Why? Because political leaders in these countries have championed policies that encourage women to become legislators (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2019).

A positive Canadian development occurred in 2015. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau decided to achieve near-parity between women and men in his cabinet. He repeated the feat when he formed a new cabinet in 2019. Nonetheless, with the exception of Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, men continue to hold the most powerful cabinet positions, namely finance, foreign affairs, veteran affairs and national defence, and, of course, prime minister. Canada is a liberal democracy, but it is a liberal democracy in which more than half the population is represented by scarcely more than one-quarter of parliamentarians. Sixty countries, including Kazakhstan, South Sudan, Angola, and Uganda, can boast a larger percentage of female parliamentarians than Canada can.

Time for Review

- The first decades of the twenty-first century have witnessed the rise of populist parties in many countries thanks to the intensification of globalization, which has eliminated many well-paid manufacturing jobs and increased immigration, thus threatening some categories of the population economically and culturally.
- Women were excluded from political life until the early twentieth century. Although they have made big inroads since then, they are now hampered by a reaction against their ascent and by economic barriers to their political participation.

The Future of Work and Politics

Although work has changed enormously over the years, one thing has remained constant for centuries. Businesses have always looked for ways to cut costs and boost profits. Two of the most effective means they have adopted for accomplishing these goals involve introducing new technologies and seeking to create political environments that enhance profitability. Much is uncertain about the future. However, it is a pretty safe bet that businesses will continue to follow these established practices.

Just how they will be implemented is less predictable. For example, it is possible to anticipate technological disruption and develop training programs that upgrade the skills of the labour force in a thoughtful fashion. It is also possible to reduce work hours to make up for anticipated job losses, bolstering worker satisfaction and increasing productivity in the process. On the other hand, new technology can be used to replace workers, deskill jobs, and employ low-cost labour on a larger scale.

The choice between these alternatives is not solely in the hands of business. Especially in democracies, citizens have the capacity to influence the direction of change. The people who would benefit most from the kinds of policies outlined in this chapter—the working and middle classes—are at a disadvantage in this regard because they lack the financial resources that routinely win political influence. Their organizational skills and political creativity will therefore play a decisive role in a future that is up for grabs.

Time for Review

- Societies now face the choice of reducing work hours and promoting skill upgrades for anticipated future jobs or using new technology to replace workers, deskill jobs, and employ low-cost labour on a larger scale.
- The choice between these alternatives will be decided in the political arena by people organized in political parties and social movements.

Summary

1. **What is political economy?**
   Political economy is the study of the ways in which wealth influences power and power influences wealth.

2. **How is power exercised and who exercises it?**
   Power is exercised by governments from above and by political parties, social movements and other social forces from below. Political systems are characterized by the prevalent type of authority and the degree to which civil society influences government.
   Power is correlated with wealth and organization, so political change tends to occur when these political resources accrue in the hand of particular categories of the population, such as social classes and geographical regions.

3. **What are markets and how are they organized?**
   Markets are social relations that regulate the exchange of goods and services. They vary over time and place in the degree to which they are free or regulated by government.

4. **How do markets affect jobs?**
   Relatively free markets encourage the kind of cost-cutting that results in the proliferation of bad jobs, including part-time work and jobs in the gig economy. Regulation of markets by democratic governments—by reducing work hours and providing extensive training for anticipated future jobs—can promote higher worker satisfaction and income.

5. **How does automation affect jobs?**
   Automation has eliminated many jobs, beginning with routine jobs and now, thanks to artificial intelligence, extending to more creative jobs. One of the main issues facing all societies is how to transition to a society in which much work requires little human intervention.

6. **What are some of the forces that will affect the future of work and politics?**
   (a) *The rise of populism.* Populism has gained strength because globalization has eliminated many well-paid manufacturing jobs and increased immigration, thus threatening some categories of the population economically and culturally.
   (b) *The entry of women into political life.* Women, excluded from political life until the early twentieth century, have made big inroads since then but are now hampered by a reaction against their ascent and by economic barriers to their participation in politics.
   (c) *Automation.* Societies now face the choice of reducing work hours and promoting skill upgrades for anticipated future jobs or using new technology to replace workers, deskill jobs, and employ low-cost labour on a larger scale. The choice between these alternatives will be decided in the political arena by people organized in political parties and social movements.

Note

1. For an animated map showing higher-than-normal and lower-than-normal surface temperatures worldwide from 1880 to 2018, visit the NASA Climate Change YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXXOkhoki8s.

14 Families

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Distinguish between the traditional nuclear family and the more structurally diverse families that are common today.
- Compare functionalist, conflict, and feminist accounts of family life.
- Describe romantic relationships and couple formation in contemporary society.
- Assess the impact of divorce on adults and children.
- Identify policies that can be implemented to accommodate different family forms.

Is "The Family" in Decline?

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's message to the Canadian public in late March 2020 was clear and forceful: "Enough is enough. Go home and stay home. This is what we all need to be doing." By way of offering material support for his message, he went on to promise new "measures to support families" (Trudeau, 2020). Canada was not the only country to issue such an edict. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, leaders around the world urged their citizens to isolate at home with their families.

The prime minister's directive suggested that homes protect their inhabitants because homes are where families reside, and family members typically love and care for one another. However, for some Canadians, home is anything but a refuge. Home puts them in harm's way or prevents them from receiving needed care and support. Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic many adults and children who shared their home with an abusive partner or parent were trapped with their aggressor and enjoyed few opportunities for external support (Campbell, 2020). Five weeks after Trudeau's statement, Maryam Monsef, Canada's minister for women and gender equality, reported that the domestic violence rate had surged 20 percent to 30 percent in some parts of the country over the preceding month, with one women's shelter in Toronto reporting a 400 percent jump in calls (Patel, 2020). A Statistics Canada survey found that 10 percent of women were very or extremely concerned about violence in the home during the COVID-19 pandemic (Amin, 2020).

Prime Minister Trudeau's directive also implied that "home" and "family" are synonymous. They are not. For instance, according to the latest Canadian census, nearly 12 percent of Canadians live alone. Self-isolation in a one-person household during the COVID-19 pandemic is widely believed to have been associated with negative consequences for mental health, prompting Statistics Canada to conduct a survey on the subject, the results of which are unfortunately still unavailable as of this writing (Statistics Canada, 2019e, 2020c).

If the realities of family life sometimes don't match people's preconceptions, it is also the case that preconceptions about the family vary widely. Disagreements commonly centre on whether the family is in decline and, if so, what should be done about it.

The debate is not new. People have been debating this issue since the mid-nineteenth century. Listen to John Laing, a Protestant minister in Ontario, in 1878: "We may expect to see further disintegration until the family shall disappear. . . . In all things civil and sacred the tendency of the age is towards individualism . . . [which is] silently undermining the divine institution of the family" (quoted in Pence and Jacobs, 2001).

When people talk about the decline of the family, they often mean the decline of the **nuclear family**. The nuclear family comprises two married, opposite-sex parents and their biological children who share the same residence. Others refer still more narrowly to the **traditional nuclear family**, a nuclear family where the wife works in the home without pay while the husband works outside the home for money.

A **nuclear family** comprises two married, opposite-sex parents and their biological children who share the same residence.

A **traditional nuclear family** is a nuclear family in which the husband works outside the home for money and the wife works without pay in the home.

Some sociologists, many of them functionalists, view the erosion of the nuclear family as an unmitigated disaster (Blankenhorn, 2007; Popenoe, 1998). In their view, a host of social ills—rising rates of crime, illegal drug use, poverty, and welfare dependency—result when children do not grow up in stable married-parent households. They encourage the implementation of a range of legal and cultural reforms to shore up marriage, including making it more difficult to get a divorce and placing less emphasis on individual happiness at the expense of family responsibility.

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The nuclear ideal

Other sociologists are swayed by conflict and feminist theories, disagreeing with the functionalist view (Coontz, 2004; Ferree, 2010). They emphasize that families can be structured in many ways. This diversity of family forms increases as people adapt to new social pressures. They also argue that changing family forms do not automatically lead to deterioration in quality of life. In fact, different family forms can *improve* the way people live, especially when accompanied by economic and political reforms, such as the creation of an affordable nationwide day-care system.

We have organized this chapter around the debate concerning the alleged decline of the Canadian family. We first outline the functional theory of the family because the issues raised by functionalism remain a focus of sociological controversy. We next present a critique of functionalism, borrowing from the work of conflict theorists and feminists. In particular, we show that the nuclear family became the dominant and ideal family form as a result of specific social and historical conditions. When these conditions changed, the nuclear family became less prevalent, and new family forms emerged. We describe the characteristics of these new family forms in Canada in the twenty-first century, highlighting their implications for families and the broader society. As we will see, although new family forms solve some problems, they are not an unqualified blessing. The chapter's concluding section therefore considers the kinds of policies that might help alleviate some of the most serious concerns faced by families today.

Time for Review

- What differentiates the nuclear family from the traditional nuclear family?
- In what ways do contemporary families differ from families of the past?

Functionalism and the Nuclear Ideal

Functional Theory

People must cooperate economically for society to survive. In addition, they must have babies and they must raise their offspring in an emotionally supportive environment so they can learn the ways of the group and eventually function as productive adults. Functionalists have argued since the 1940s that the nuclear family is best suited to meet these challenges because it effectively performs five main functions. It provides a basis for regulated sexual activity, economic cooperation, reproduction, socialization, and emotional support (Murdock, 1949: 1–22; Parsons, 1955).

Polygamy expands the nuclear family "horizontally" by adding one or more spouses (usually women) to the household.

The **extended family** expands the nuclear family "vertically" by adding another generation—one or more of the spouses' parents—to the household.

Functionalists argue that the prevalence of the nuclear family provides evidence of its ability to perform these functions. Other family forms exist, such as **polygamy**, which expands the nuclear unit "horizontally" by adding one or more spouses (almost always wives) to the household. Although polygamy is legally permitted in many less industrialized countries in Africa and Asia, the vast majority of families are monogamous because they cannot afford to support several wives and many children. The **extended family** expands the nuclear family "vertically" by adding another generation—one or more of the spouses' parents—to the household. Extended families were once common throughout the world, and they still are in some places. Although functionalists acknowledge these other

types of family forms, they argue that the basic building block of the extended family and of the polygamous family is the nuclear unit.

George Murdock, a functionalist, conducted a well-known study of 250 mostly preliterate, foraging societies (sometimes called "hunting-and-gathering societies") in the 1940s. Murdock wrote, "Either as the sole prevailing form of the family or as the basic unit from which more complex familial forms are compounded, [the nuclear family] exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society" (Murdock, 1949: 2). Furthermore, Murdock argued that the nuclear family is always based on **marriage**, which he defined as a socially approved, likely long-term sexual and economic union between a man and a woman. Marriage also involves rights and obligations between spouses and between parents and their children.

Marriage is a socially approved, presumably long-term sexual and economic union between two people. It involves reciprocal rights and obligations between spouses and between parents and children.

Does this functionalist interpretation provide a true picture of family relations across history? We assess its adequacy by discussing families in the two settings on which functionalists focused their attention: (1) foraging societies, and (2) middle-class North American families in the 1950s.

Foraging Societies

Foraging societies are nomadic groups of 100 or fewer people. They have a gendered division of labour. Most men hunt and most women gather wild edible plants. Women also do most of the child care. However, research on foragers shows that men often tend to babies and children in such societies (Leacock, 1981; Lee, 1979). When men return from an unsuccessful hunt, they often gather food. In some foraging societies, women hunt. Thus, the gender division of labour is less strict than functionalists assume. Moreover, the gender division of labour is not associated with large differences in power and authority because women produce up to 80 percent of the food. Overall, men have few privileges that women don't also enjoy.

Foragers travel in small camps or bands. The band decides by consensus when to send out groups of hunters. When they return from the hunt, they distribute game to all band members based on need. Hunters do not hunt based on their nuclear family's needs. Nor do hunters distribute game only to their nuclear family. Contrary to Murdock (1949), the band, not the nuclear family, is the most efficient social organization for providing everyone with valuable food sources in foraging societies.

franco lucato/Shutterstock

Rough gender equality is found among the !Kung-San, a foraging society in the Kalahari Desert in Botswana. Women play a key economic role by providing food.

Life in foraging societies is highly cooperative. Women and men often care for each other's children. In contrast to the functionalists' claim that socialization is the "basic and irreducible" function of the nuclear family, the band, not the nuclear family, assumes responsibility for child socialization in foraging societies. Socialization is more a public than a private matter. As a seventeenth-century Innu man from northern Québec said to a Jesuit priest who was trying to convince him to adopt European ways of raising children, "Thou hast no sense. You French people love only your own children; but we all love all the children of our tribe" (quoted in Leacock, 1981: 50).

In sum, research on foraging societies calls into question many of the functionalists' generalizations. In foraging societies, relations between the sexes are generally egalitarian. Each nuclear unit does not execute its important economic and socialization functions in isolation and in private. Instead, cooperative band members execute most economic and socialization functions in public.

Let us now assess the functionalist theory of the family in the light of evidence concerning Canadian families in the years just after World War II, the second focus of the functionalists' attention.

The Canadian Family in the 1950s

As a description of family patterns in the 15 years after World War II, functionalism has some merit. During the Great Depression (1929–39) and World War II (1939–45), Canadians were forced to postpone marriage (if they married at all) because of widespread poverty, government-imposed austerity, and physical separation. After this long and dreadful ordeal, many Canadians just wanted to settle down, have children, and enjoy the peace, pleasure, and security that family life seemed to offer. Conditions could not have been better for doing just that. The immediate postwar era was one of unparalleled optimism and prosperity. Real per capita income rose, as did the percentage of Canadians who owned their own homes. By the mid-1950s, employment and personal income reached all-time highs. Various services and legislative amendments that had been introduced during World War II to encourage wives and mothers to join the paid labour force were rescinded. The expectation was that a return to "normal" meant the resumption of the men's role as providers and women's role as housewives (Kingsbury and Scanzoni, 1993).

The **marriage rate** is the number of marriages that occur in a year for every 1000 people in the population.

The **divorce rate** is the number of divorces that occur in a year for every 1000 people in the population.

These conditions resulted in a marriage boom. Increasingly, Canadians lived in married-couple families. The proportion of "never married" Canadians decreased, and the average age at first marriage dropped between 1941 and 1956 from 24.4 to 23.4 years for brides and from 27.6 to 26.1 years for bridegrooms (McVey and Kalbach, 1995: 225). A second result was a baby boom. During this period, there was a spike in the number of children born. And unlike the situation today, married men were much more likely than married women were to be working for pay. For example, in 1951, 90 percent of married men but only 11 percent of married women were in the paid labour force.

Mimi Matte's *Family Outing* (1998): In the 1950s, married women often hid their frustrations with family life.

Source: Courtesy of the Estate of Mimi Matte

Of course, not all women could afford to stay out of the workforce. Women living in poverty have often worked both inside and outside the home. However, middle-class women tended overwhelmingly to engage only in domestic activities, devoting increasing attention to child-rearing and housework.

The immediate postwar situation described by the functionalists was in many respects an historical aberration. Trends in marriage, divorce, and fertility show a gradual *weakening* of the nuclear family from the early 1900s until the end of World War II, and the resumption of a weakening trend beginning in the 1960s. The **marriage rate** (the number of marriages that occur in a year for every 1000 people in the population) never attained the heights reached in the immediate postwar period. Instead, marriage rates fell sharply from the 1970s onward (see Box 14.1). The **divorce rate** (the number of divorces

BOX 14.1 Social Policy

SAYING "I DO" IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Family sociologist Philip Cohen believes fewer weddings are happening as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Cohen, 2020). He used a novel approach to test his hypothesis. On an annual basis, Google searches exhibit a predictable pattern: a peak in wedding-related searches between mid-January and March followed by a steady drop through to the end of November, before rising again. Cohen determined that pattern didn't happen in 2020. Instead, the normal spike in January sputtered in February and then collapsed altogether in March and April, even though these months are typically the height of the wedding Google search season.

Data from Canada suggest many couples put their wedding plans on hold too. The number of marriage licences issued in March and April 2020 was well off the average for those months (Chin, 2020). Some couples were probably heeding advice from government officials to postpone their weddings while others were unable to leave Canada for destination weddings. Hardly anyone, it seems, opted for a small private ceremony.

The number of Canadian weddings will likely rebound once the pandemic is over, but because the marriage rate has been steadily declining for decades, it would be unrealistic to think that there will be a long-term upward swing.

Critical Thinking Questions

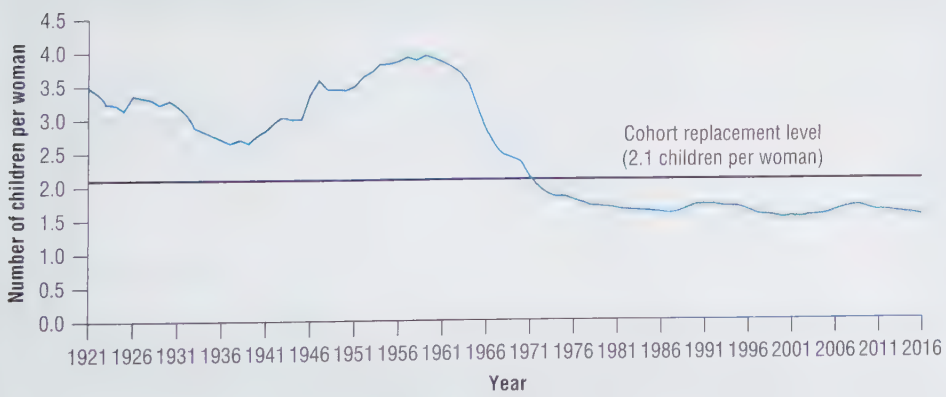
1. Some scholars suggest that weddings will evolve as a result of the pandemic. For example, there may be more "micro-weddings" in which couples invite few guests. Can you think of other changes in wedding behaviour that might be a likely consequence of the pandemic?
2. How might COVID-19 affect the divorce rate and the rate of marital separation? Will the pattern resemble that for weddings? Why or why not?

that occur in a year for every 1000 people in the population) increased in the 1960s with the introduction of more liberal divorce laws. However, in the 1990s, the divorce rate stabilized and then began to decline. The decline was not due to a renewed commitment to marriage but reflected the fact that fewer Canadians were getting married in the first place. Finally, the **total fertility rate** reached its peak in the late 1950s and then dropped (see Figure 14.1).

The total fertility rate is the average number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years and experienced the same age-specific fertility rates observed in a given year.

The early functionalists, it seems, generalized too hastily from the families they knew best—their own. By the early 1960s, the earlier trends in Canada had reasserted themselves. Thus, as the retreat from marriage intensified and family forms began to diversify, the functionalist view of the family increasingly fell out of step with the experiences of Canadian families.

FIGURE 14.1
Total Fertility Rate, Canada, 1921–2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Fertility: Overview, 1921–2016. Catalogue No. 91-209-X. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry (Figure 5). (2018) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

Functionalists missed the big picture largely because they ignored the degree to which (1) the traditional nuclear family is based on gender inequality and (2) changes in power relations between women and men alter family structures. Sociologists working in the conflict and feminist traditions have developed these points, as we will now see.

Conflict and Feminist Theories

Marx's close friend and co-author, Friedrich Engels, first proposed the idea that power relations between women and men explain the occurrence of different family forms. Engels argued that the traditional nuclear family developed only when inequality of wealth did. According to Engels, after societies developed to the point where they could produce more than they required for the subsistence of their members—that is, after they generated surplus wealth—some men were able to gain control of it. Those men then became concerned about how to pass surplus wealth on to their children, chiefly their sons. Engels believed that a man could safely transmit inheritance to his sons only by controlling his wife sexually and economically. Through economic control, the man could ensure that his property would not be squandered and would remain his and his alone. Through sexual control in the form of enforced female monogamy, the man could ensure that his property would be transmitted only to *his* offspring. Engels concluded that only by eliminating private property and creating economic equality—that is, by establishing communism—could gender inequality, and therefore the traditional nuclear family, be abolished (Engels, 1970 [1884]: 138–9).

Engels was right to note the traditional nuclear family's long history of male economic and sexual domination. Early Canadian law was informed by a vision of the family in which the wife's labour belonged to her husband. Although a series of legal reforms have altered the situation, as recently as the mid-twentieth century, a wife could not rent a car, qualify for a loan, or sign a contract without her husband's permission.

However, Engels incorrectly believed that communism would eliminate gender inequality in the family. After all, gender inequality is common in societies that call themselves communist and in societies that call themselves capitalist. For example, the Soviet Union "left intact the fundamental family structures, authority relations, and socialization patterns crucial to personality formation and sex-role differentiation. Only a genuine sexual revolution [or, as we prefer to call it, a *gender revolution*] could have shattered these patterns and made possible the real emancipation of women" (Lapidus, 1978: 7).

The existence of gender inequality in non-capitalist societies has led most feminists to conclude that something other than, or in addition to, capitalism is responsible for gender inequality and the persistence of the traditional nuclear family. According to the feminist view, *patriarchy*—male dominance and norms justifying that dominance—is deeply rooted in the history of humankind. For feminists, only a genuine gender revolution can alter this state of affairs.

Just such a revolution gained force in Canada and other rich industrialized countries about 60 years ago. It produced broad social change. Women's employment in the paid labour market rose dramatically. Women caught up with and then overtook men in rates of college and university completion. Women demanded more rights over their own bodies. As their economic power increased and their leisure time dwindled, women began to insist that men shoulder more of the housework.

Despite these remarkable changes, most scholars today concede that the revolution produced uneven results (England, 2010; Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård, 2015). We can observe the mixed outcomes of the gender revolution by examining the gender division of labour.

The Gender Division of Labour

In a traditional nuclear family, men are expected to go out and earn a family wage, whereas women are expected to perform domestic chores and care for family members. But today, approximately 70 percent of Canadian women with children under the age of 16 are in paid

employment (Uppal, 2015). This statistic tells us the traditional nuclear family is no longer the norm. Has the twenty-first century ushered in a more equitable distribution in the amount of time Canadian men and women spend in paid work and housework? Yes and no.

Yes because patterns of paid and unpaid work have changed over time. Participation in the paid labour force has increased sharply for women and fallen slightly for men (Drolet, Uppal, and LaRochelle-Côté, 2016). Time spent doing household chores has increased for men and fallen for women.

But the answer is also no. Despite signs of convergence, gender differences persist. On average, men still spend more time than women do working for pay. Women still do more unpaid domestic work than men do (Evertsson, 2014; Moyser and Burlock, 2018). For example, Canadian women spend on average 2.8 hours per day on household chores compared to 1.9 hours for men (Moyser and Burlock, 2018).

Young, dual-income couples tend to participate equally in paid and unpaid work when there are no children in the household. However, the situation often changes to a traditional gender division of labour soon after childbirth, with mothers tending to reduce and fathers tending to boost their hours of paid employment (Bianchi et al., 2012; Marshall, 2011).

Two main factors reduce the gender gap in domestic chores. First, the division of household labour is more equal when the gap between the husband's and the wife's earnings is relatively small (Fahlén, 2016). The increased status of women who earn about the same as their husbands seems to enable them to get their husbands to do more around the house; they can translate earning power into domestic influence. In addition, women who earn relatively high incomes are able to use some of their money to pay others to do domestic work.

The second factor that shrinks the gender gap in domestic labour is attitude. Specifically, equality in the household division of labour is more likely the more a husband and wife agree that there *should* be equality (Treas and Tai, 2016). Agreement on this issue is often linked to both spouses having a postsecondary education. It follows that greater equality between men and women in domestic work requires greater equality between them in the paid labour force, along with broader cultural acceptance of the need for gender equality.

In sum, conflict theorists and feminists have performed a valuable sociological service by highlighting the importance of power relations in structuring family life. The gender revolution, however, is but one piece of the dramatic transformation of family life over the past 60 years. We next examine changes in attitudes toward mate selection and describe the variety of ways in which partnering occurs in Canada today.

Time for Review

- In what ways were families in foraging societies and Canadian families in the postwar period different from what structural-functionalists expected?
- How was Engels both right and wrong about the role of capitalism in reinforcing gender inequality in family life?
- How has the gender division of labour changed and remained the same?

Mate Selection

Love and Mate Selection

Today, most Canadians consider love an essential ingredient in marriage if not *the* most essential ingredient. This has not been the case in most societies historically (Abbott, 2011). Third parties typically arranged marriages, and the selection of marriage partners was based mainly on maximizing their families' prestige, economic benefits, and political advantages.

With the rise of liberalism and individualism in the eighteenth century, the idea that love should guide the choice of a marriage partner gained popularity since these philosophies stressed freedom of the individual over community welfare (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Cherlin, 2009). However, today's intimate link between love and marriage materialized only in the early twentieth century, when Hollywood and the advertising industry began to pitch self-gratification on a grand scale. These new spinners of fantasy and desire promoted the idea that an important aspect of self-gratification was the thrill of romance leading to marriage.

Although you might think that allowing people to choose their own marriage partner would give them an unlimited pool of likely candidates, in reality, there are three main reasons why social forces largely determine who people fall in love with and marry. First, potential spouses bring resources to the "marriage market"—financial assets, status, values, tastes, knowledge, and so on. They use these resources to attract mates and compete against rivals. Since most people want to maximize the resources they gain from marriage and want a mate who has similar or complementary values, tastes, and knowledge, the assets you bring to the marriage market influence whom you marry.

Second, others often intervene to prevent marriages between people from different groups. They do so to ensure group cohesion. Families, neighbourhoods, ethnic communities, and religious institutions typically encourage young people to identify with the groups they are members of and to think of themselves as different from members of other groups (see Box 14.2). These third parties may even apply sanctions to young people who threaten to marry outside the group. Among Canada's visible minorities, intermarriage is becoming more common, and its frequency increases from the immigrant to subsequent generations. Nonetheless, there is still a tendency toward in-marriage, and in some visible minority groups, that tendency is strong (Milan, Maheux, and Chui, 2010; see Table 14.1).

The third set of sociological factors that influence who you are likely to fall in love with and marry is related to demographic variables. The likelihood of marrying inside your group increases with the group's size and geographical concentration. You are more likely to choose an appropriate mate from outside your group if you are a member of a small group or a group that is dispersed geographically since there may simply be too few prospects in your group from which to choose (Brym, Gillespie, and Gillis, 1985; Hou et al., 2015).

TABLE 14.1

Mixed Unions among Visible Minority Canadians

	All Couples	Second-Generation Couples	
	Percentage Mixed Unions	Men in Mixed Couples as a Percentage of All Men in Couples	Women in Mixed Couples as a Percentage of All Women in Couples
South Asian	13	18	28
Chinese	19	48	60
Southeast Asian	22	18	28
Korean	23	53	71
Arab	25	50	42
Filipino	30	62	71
Black	40	72	56
Latin American	48	65	61
Japanese	79	74	78

Note: These data are derived from the 2011 *National Household Survey*. "Mixed unions" include (1) mixed marriages and cohabiting pairs and (2) unions between members of different visible minority groups and between Whites and members of visible minority groups.

Sources: Alba (2017); Statistics Canada (2014)

BOX 14.2 Sociology and the Media

LOVE IS BLIND

Over just three weeks in February 2020, Netflix premiered 10 episodes of a reality TV dating show that became a viral hit. *Love Is Blind* got 30 contestants to engage in speed dating by interacting within "pods" that allow them to talk but not see each other. Those who coupled up presented proposals through an opaque screen. If accepted, they met face to face, at which point they would decide whether or not to go ahead and marry. The experiment continued up to the point at which they were standing at the wedding altar just six weeks after filming began, deciding for certain whether to say "I do" or dump their betrothed at the altar.

The premise of the show is that online platforms like Tinder have rendered modern dating shallow. We quickly pursue or dismiss potential mates according to their attractiveness, socioeconomic status, and race. By hiding their appearance, the show allows partners to explore compatibility without reference to social barriers that might otherwise separate them. (That said, speech patterns can provide cues as to someone's race and ethnicity, so the removal of barriers is not quite as absolute as *Love Is Blind* would suggest.)

In Season 1, Lauren Speed and Cameron Hamilton quickly became fan favourites. Though they could not see each other, they discussed the fact that he was White and had dated Black women before, and she was Black and had never dated a White man.

Nathan Congleton/NBC/NBCU Photo Bank via Getty Images

Cameron Hamilton and Lauren Speed in the reality dating show *Love Is Blind*.

As the relationship progressed, Lauren and Cameron both faced scrutiny about their decision to date someone from a different racial background. When Lauren described Cameron to her best friend over lunch, she was asked what she saw as the biggest difference between dating White and Black men. Her response was a giggle in obvious reference to penis size (a popular myth being that a racial difference exists); but she assured her friend that she was pleasantly surprised. When Cameron meets Lauren's dad for the first time, he has to navigate the question of whether he could handle being the only White person in a room full of Black people. However, by the closing episode, the (Black) wedding officiant who marries Cameron and Lauren renders the final verdict. He declares that their marriage is proof that love is blind after all.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. To what extent should marriage reflect a balance between individual choice and the influence of social ties?
2. Based on your own observations and experiences, would you agree that love is blind?

The ratio of men to women in a group also influences the degree to which members of each sex marry inside or outside the group. For instance, if war and imprisonment eliminate many male group members as potential marriage partners, female group members may be encouraged to marry outside the group or not marry at all.

Finally, the degree to which "local marriage markets"—schools, universities and colleges, places of work, neighbourhoods, bars, and clubs—are socially segregated influences mate selection, since this is where people often meet potential spouses. Consequently, you are more likely to marry outside your group if local marriage markets are socially heterogeneous.

True, meeting on the Internet has now replaced meeting through family and friends as the most common way to find a partner (Rosenfeld, Thomas, and Hausen, 2019). Dating apps like Hinge, Bumble, Plenty of Fish, and happn are growing in popularity. New apps are popping up all the time. Some dating apps make it easier to find partners with specific

characteristics. For example, JSwipe caters to Jewish singles whereas MuzMatch has been designed for Muslims. However, the process of falling in love and choosing a mate is far from random because of the operation of the social forces we have just listed. Most people still tend to marry within racial, ethnic, religious, and educational groups (Kalmijn, 1998; Potarca, 2017; Yodanis and Lauer, 2016).

In the past, couples followed a fairly direct path from dating to engagement to marriage. Today, young adults have a variety of options available to them (Tillman, Brewster, and Holway, 2019). We next discuss differences between marriage and cohabitation before describing the variety of couple relationships that exist in Canada today.

Marriage and Cohabitation

The great majority of Canadians will marry at least once in their lifetime but, for a growing number of people, the transition from being single to being married is likely to involve cohabitation as an intermediate step (Clark and Crompton, 2006).

Marriage and cohabitation are similar in some ways. Both involve regular sexual relations and a common residence. Marriage, however, is a contract that is realized through ritual and legal authority. All marriages start with a wedding, which requires a licence and involves an exchange of vows before an authorized official and witnesses. Cohabitation typically starts without fanfare.

Another difference is that marriage has clearly defined roles and expectations. For example, marriage connects spouses to a larger kinship network that can be called upon for support. In contrast, couples who cohabit must create their own "scripts." They must agree on whether and how they will share money and other assets. They must also decide whether and how they want their employers, health-care providers, and families to recognize their union. Because kinship ties can be nebulous in cohabiting relationships, social support from families is not guaranteed. Sometimes, families may not even know about a cohabiting relationship; one study found that 10 percent of young adults did not even tell their parents about their first cohabiting relationship (Thornton, Axinn, and Xie, 2007).

Finally, marriages are more enforceable than are cohabiting relationships (Cherlin, 2010). Said differently, the penalties for ending a marriage are greater than those for ending cohabiting relationships. Thus, if couples choose to go their separate ways, rights to property are more clearly specified in marriages than in cohabiting relationships. These differences mean that marriage is a social institution (Nock, 2009). Cohabitation is not.

Between 1981 and 2016, the rate of cohabitation nearly quintupled from 5.6 percent to 27.1 percent of all people living together as a couple (Statistics Canada, 2012c; 2017b). Growing rates of cohabitation in Canada mirror what is occurring in other high-income countries, albeit with some variation. Cohabitation is the norm in Sweden and Denmark, but remains rare (although it is on the rise) in Italy, Greece, and Poland (Perelli-Harris et al., 2012; Sobotka and Toulemon, 2008).

Rates of cohabitation are not uniform across Canada either. In Québec, rates of cohabitation have long soared above the national average (LeBourdais and Lapierre-Adamcyk, 2004; Pollard and Wu, 1998). Cohabitors in Québec are also significantly less likely to convert their relationships to marriages and less likely to experience the breakdown of the relationship than are cohabitors in the rest of Canada (Wu and Pollard, 2000). Together, these trends suggest that cohabitation is quickly replacing marriage as the modal way of family life in Québec.

Why are rates of cohabitation so much higher in Québec than they are in the rest of Canada? Researchers point to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s that severed Québec's longstanding links with the Roman Catholic Church and rapidly transformed the province into a secular society (Laplante, 2013). After the church lost its grip on social life, a new generation of Québeckers were free to reject conservative religious teaching on marriage and to adopt a more liberal stance toward intimate relationships.

Today, most Canadians between the ages of 20 and 29 experience a common-law relationship as their first union (Kerr, Moyser, and Beaujot, 2006; Wright, 2019). Few Canadians, especially those who are younger, think there is anything wrong with cohabiting.

Still, cohabitation tends to be short-lived. In Canada, the average length of a cohabiting relationship is a little over three years (Heuveline and Timberlake, 2004). Of the cohabiting relationships that end, about one-third are converted into marriages. The others involve a breakup.

Couples cohabit for many reasons (Sassler and Miller, 2017). Some couples fit into our earlier description of using cohabitation as an intermediate step on the path to marriage. For them, cohabitation is a trial marriage. Other couples view cohabitation as an alternative to living alone. They opt for the convenience, efficiency, and pleasure of living with someone but have few if any expectations for the future. Still others view cohabitation as an alternative to marriage. For these couples, cohabitation is a permanent living arrangement that best meets their needs.

The reasons people give for cohabiting tend to vary by age. Young adults are more likely to see cohabitation as a way of testing compatibility. They treat marriage as the end goal. In contrast, older adults, particularly those who are coming out of a previous marriage, tend to view cohabitation as an alternative to marriage. For many of them, marriage is the last thing on their minds.

New types of relationships have also sprung up in the gap between singlehood and cohabitation. One such relationship is known as **friends with benefits** (FWB). FWB involves having occasional sexual relations with someone who is a friend, but without commitment or romantic purpose. **Hookups** represent another arrangement. Hookups typically involve a sexual encounter with a stranger or acquaintance that is spontaneous and unlikely to be repeated. Random hookups might take place at a campus party, but increasingly people are turning to apps such as Tinder and Grindr so that they can deploy their mobile devices to seek out willing partners in close proximity.

Friends with benefits involves occasional sexual relations with a friend, without commitment or romantic feelings for one another.

Hookups are spontaneous, one-time sexual encounters between strangers or acquaintances.

Hookups and FWB are relatively common on university and college campuses. Are these relationships as self-serving and shallow as some people think? Some sociologists argue that it is exploitive to engage in sex simply to fulfill physical needs while waiting for a better prospect to come along (Williams and Adams, 2013). They also wonder whether an established pattern of uncommitted sexual encounters can permanently impair a young person's capacity or desire to achieve emotional intimacy with another person.

Other sociologists think that FWB relationships exist because they serve a larger social purpose. When interviewed about FWB relationships, young adults said they enjoy the relative security of having sex with someone they know and find such relationships less awkward than casual sex (Karlsen and Træen, 2013). More importantly, young people assert that one of the chief criteria by which contemporary relationships are judged to be successful is whether one is a good lover. Hookups and FWB relationships may be socially accepted means for young people to improve their love-making techniques and demonstrate their sexual competence to others.

Generally, FWB relationships last only a few months. Fewer than one in five FWB relationships turns into a romantic relationship (Owen, Fincham, and Manthos, 2013). This fact has not stopped Hollywood from idealizing FWB relationships as a means of finding true love.

Living Apart Together

Another new living arrangement that falls between singlehood and cohabitation is living apart together (LAT). **LAT** relationships are living arrangements in which intimate partners, who regard themselves as a couple and are recognized as such by others, share living quarters on an intermittent basis but maintain separate households and finances (Cherlin, 2010; Liefbroer, Poortman, and Seltzer, 2015). For some scholars, LAT represents just a transitory new stage on the path to possible cohabitation and marriage. Other scholars view LAT relationships as a new family form that allows partners maximum flexibility in balancing personal freedom with their desire for intimacy (Coulter and Hu, 2017; Duncan and Phillips, 2011). One thing is clear. LAT relationships challenge the traditional notion that a committed intimate relationship can occur only within the confines of a single household (Karlsson and Borell, 2002).

LAT, which stands for *living apart together*, is a living arrangement in which each person maintains his or her separate residence, but both people consider themselves to be in a committed intimate relationship with each other.

Research suggests that 8 percent of the Canadian population aged 20 and over identified themselves as LAT in 2011, with older adults less likely to enter this type of relationship than are younger Canadians (Turcotte, 2013). Older adults, however, are much more likely than are younger adults to view this living arrangement as a deliberate lifestyle choice rather than a temporary or involuntary circumstance (Benson and Coleman, 2016; Turcotte, 2013). Older adults give various reasons for preferring LAT relationships over cohabitation (de Jong Gierveld and Merz, 2013). First, many older adults in LAT relationships are reluctant to give up their established routines. Older adults also prefer LAT relationships to avoid the financial and legal entanglements that come with cohabitation (Funk and Kobayashi, 2016). Finally, maintaining their own residence allows older adults to preserve ties to adult children who may not fully accept their parent's new relationship.

Same-Sex Marriage and Civil Unions

In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage, with Canada following suit in 2005. There are now 28 countries where same-sex marriage is legal. An additional number of Western European countries allow same-sex couples to register their partnerships under the law in what is referred to as civil unions. Civil unions recognize the partnerships as having some or all of the legal rights of marriage. The idea that same-sex couples can form a family is becoming normalized, at least in Western countries.

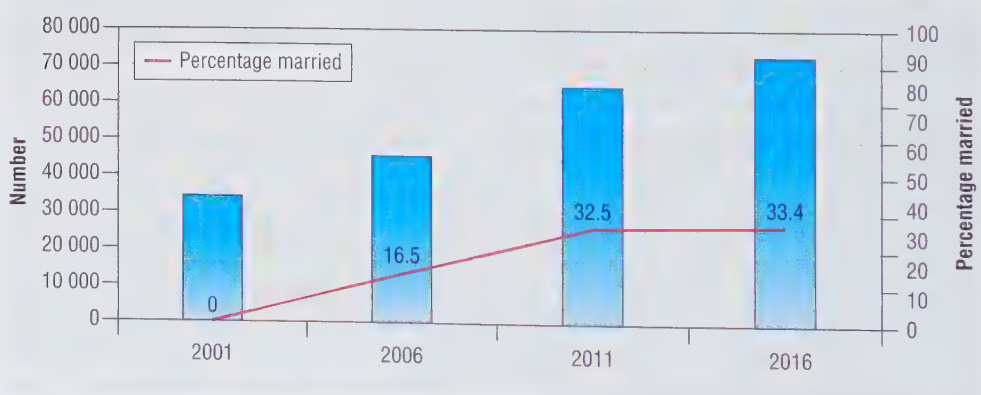
The 2016 census recorded 72 880 same-sex couple households, which accounts for less than 1 percent of all couple households in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Same-sex couple households are slightly more likely to be male than female. Nine out of ten same-sex couple households have no children and just under a third involve legal marriage.

The legal and social definition of "family" is being broadened around the world to include same-sex partners in long-term relationships. Although this change often generates controversy, it reflects the fact that most same-sex couples, like most heterosexual couples, want a long-term, intimate relationship with another adult (Chauncey, 2005). Moreover, many same-sex partners want their relationships to be formally recognized by the state so that they can enjoy the same legal rights as do married heterosexual couples. For example, marriage allows same-sex partners to participate in medical decision making, jointly own property, and inherit property when one partner dies.

Figure 14.2 describes trends over time in the number of same-sex partner households in Canada as well as changes in the proportion of those who are married. Between 2001 and 2016, there has been an increase in the number of same-sex couple households. (Because same-sex marriage did not become legal until 2005, the 2006 census was the

FIGURE 14.2

Same-Sex Households in Canada, 2001–2016



Sources: Adapted from Statistics Canada, Same-sex couples in Canada in 2016. Census of Population, 2016. Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016007. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry. (2017j) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016007/98-200-x2016007-eng.cfm

first census to distinguish between married and cohabiting same-sex couples.) Of those in same-sex partner households, the proportion who were married doubled, jumping from 16.5 percent in 2006 to 32.5 percent in 2011. Since then, the trend appears to have levelled off, with 33.4 percent of all same-sex couples in a married relationship in 2016.

Time for Review

- What makes marriage a social institution?
- What new and emerging family forms exist in Canada?

Divorce

Although few people enter marriage with the expectation that it will fail, the reality is that many marriages do not last. Before 1968, divorce was a complex legal process, and it was rare. Adultery was the only grounds for divorce in Canada, except in Nova Scotia, where cruelty was sufficient grounds even before Confederation (Morrison, 1987). The Divorce Act of 1968 expanded the grounds for granting a divorce to include mental or physical cruelty, rape, gross addiction to alcohol or other drugs, sodomy, bestiality, and homosexual acts. The dissolution of a marriage was also permitted on grounds of unspecified "marital breakdown" if couples lived apart for a number of years. The 1985 amendment of Canada's Divorce Act specified only one ground for divorce—marital breakdown, defined in three ways: (1) the spouses lived apart for one year, (2) one of the spouses committed adultery, or (3) one spouse treated the other with mental or physical cruelty.

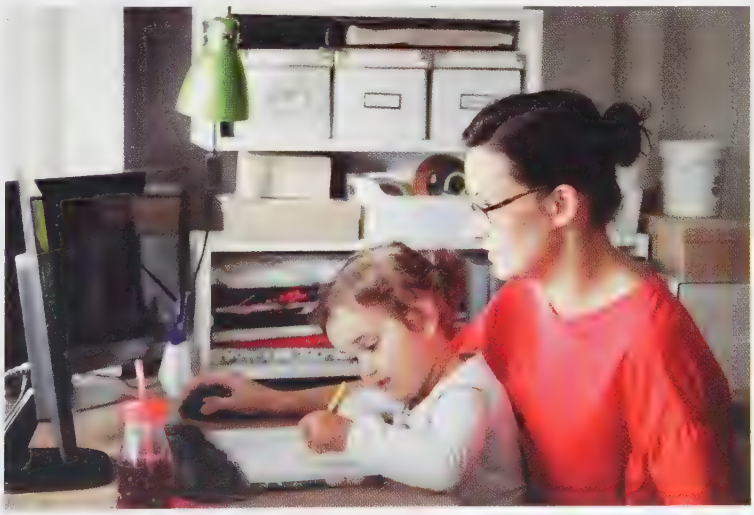
Currently, 41 percent of all marriages end in divorce before the 30th year of marriage (Kelly, 2012). In nearly all cases, divorces are granted on the basis of a couple having lived apart for at least one year (Statistics Canada, 2011c). Remember, however, that divorce statistics no longer provide an accurate picture of the number of family breakups because they do not include the formation and dissolution of cohabiting relationships. Since cohabiting relationships are less stable than marriage is, the rate of union dissolution must necessarily be much higher than the divorce rate implies.

We now turn to a brief overview of the correlates of divorce and then address its consequences.

Predictors of Divorce

Unhappiness with a spouse is an obvious correlate of divorce (Guven, Senik, and Stichnoth, 2012; Sayer et al., 2011). So are other interpersonal factors. Thus, relationships characterized by high levels of conflict, including violence, are likely to end in divorce. Equally fragile are relationships where one or both partners struggle with substance abuse or mental health problems (Kreager et al., 2013; Leonard, Smith, and Homish, 2014; Strohschein, 2012). Infidelity is also associated with divorce (England, Allison, and Sayer, 2014; Finch and Beacham, 2010).

Demographic and social factors also make a difference. Women are more likely than men are to initiate divorce. Divorce is more likely to occur in the earlier years of marriage (Clark and Compton, 2006) and if couples are younger than 20 when they marry (Cohen, 2018). Couples who are religious are less likely to divorce, particularly when they belong to the same religion (Gurrentz, 2017; Lyngstad and



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Divorce is responsible for the majority of lone-parent families in Canada today. Although female-headed lone-parent families are far more common than male-headed lone-parent families, the number of male-headed lone parent households is rising more quickly than the number of female-headed lone parent households.

Jalovaara, 2010). Social factors associated with an increased risk of divorce include living in poverty, having less education, cohabiting with one's spouse before marriage, having a premarital birth or a previous marriage, and having grown up in a household without two continuously married parents (Amato, 2010; Bumpass and Wu, 2000; Clark and Compton, 2006; Lyngstad and Jalovaara, 2010; Wolfinger, 2011; Woods and Emery, 2002; Wu and Pollard, 2000).

Interestingly, premarital cohabitation may be weakening as a predictor of divorce (Hewitt and DeVaus, 2009; Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006; Manning and Cohen, 2012). Researchers suspect that as cohabitation becomes more common and accepted as an intermediate step on the path to marriage, those who cohabit before marriage will no longer be prone to divorce. Family researchers are following this trend closely.

Consequences of Divorce

Although divorce enables spouses to leave unhappy marriages, serious questions have been raised about the consequences of divorce, particularly in the long term. When it comes to the consequences for children, some people claim that divorcing parents are trading their children's well-being for their own happiness. Others hold out hope there may be such a thing as a good divorce, where no permanent harm comes to those whose families break up. What does research say about this issue?

Research perspectives have shifted dramatically regarding the effects of parental divorce on a child's well-being. In the past, researchers viewed divorce as a catastrophic event in the lives of children. They evaluated children's well-being in both intact and divorced-parent households and consistently found deficits in the well-being of children in divorced-parent households. Children of divorce were said to grow into adults who struggled with high levels of depression and anxiety, battled ongoing drug and alcohol abuse, and had difficulty forming intimate relationships (Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee, 2000).

These early studies were deeply flawed. For example, researchers identified three main issues with a landmark 25-year study of divorced children (Amato, 2003). First, the children in the study were all known to be struggling with divorce and received counselling in exchange for participating in the study. Second, the study did not include a control group of children in intact households, making it impossible to test whether any differences existed between children from divorced and non-divorced families. Third, the study did not allow researchers to evaluate whether some of the problems detected in children after divorce had existed before divorce.

These criticisms ushered in more rigorous standards for how researchers ought to investigate the consequences of divorce on children's well-being. A research design that follows intact families over time makes it possible to compare outcomes between children whose parents remain married and those whose parents subsequently divorce. Such a research design also makes it possible to know whether and when in the divorce process children start developing adjustment issues.

As it turns out, researchers have learned that children experience adjustment issues even before their parents file for divorce (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale, and McRae, 1998; Strohschein, 2012). Part of the reason is because in the period leading up to divorce, the quality of the marital relationship deteriorates. Parents may withdraw from one another emotionally. They may argue more frequently and with greater intensity. Tension between parents is emotionally distressing for everyone in the family, including children. Thus, it is not uncommon for children and their parents to develop adjustment issues before divorce.

Today, most researchers study divorce from the perspective of stress theory. Stress theory suggests that experiences such as divorce require adjustment to new circumstances but do not necessarily threaten well-being. How well people are able to rebound and adjust following divorce depends on the resources they can draw on, the extent to which divorce is accompanied by other disruptions, and their attitudes about the divorce (Amato, 2000). For example, divorce is less stressful when parents continue to provide their children with reassurance and affirmation, when there are relatively few changes to children's

daily routines, and when children are encouraged to talk about their feelings. Conversely, adjustment is more difficult when parents are too overwhelmed to be effective caregivers, when divorce forces children to move out of their neighbourhood and away from peers and positive adult role models, and when children are encouraged to take the side of one parent over another.

To understand why some children are more adversely affected by parental divorce than others are, we must examine what happens to children throughout the divorce process. Researchers have identified three main factors associated with child adjustment to divorce: economic hardship, reduced contact with the non-residential parent, and further changes in family structure.

Economic Hardship

Women's income usually falls after divorce, while men's income usually changes little (LeBourdais et al., 2016; Tach and Eads, 2015). This result occurs because husbands are more likely to have a higher income than their wives do, children tend to live with their mothers after divorce, and child-support payments are often inadequate.

Although all Canadian provinces and territories have laws requiring spouses to share assets in the event of marital breakdown, the precise definition of what constitutes a "family asset" varies and creates inconsistencies across jurisdictions (Dranoff, 2001: 257). In addition, although the monetary value of tangible family assets, such as a house or money in the bank, can be calculated and shared, the valuable new property in today's society is the earning power of a professional degree, highly paid employment, work experience, a skilled trade, or other human capital. On divorce, the wife may receive an equal share of tangible property, but that does not usually result in her beginning post-divorce life on an equal footing with her former husband—especially if she retains physical custody of the couple's children and if she previously sacrificed her education and career so he could earn a college or university degree.

Child support is money paid by the non-custodial parent to the custodial parent to support the children of a separated marital, cohabiting, or sexual relationship. Under the Divorce Act, either parent may be ordered to pay child support. However, because it is common for mothers to retain custody—and because women are more likely to be economically disadvantaged—the vast majority of those ordered to pay child support are fathers.

Child support is money paid by the non-custodial parent to the custodial parent to support the children of a separated marital, cohabiting, or sexual relationship.

Every jurisdiction in Canada requires parents to support their children following separation or divorce. However, court orders do not guarantee that child support will be paid. In practice, default rates have been high, and orders for child and spousal support have been difficult to enforce. All Canadian provinces and territories now have programs to prevent non-payment. Nonetheless, the problem of "deadbeat parents" remains significant.

Economic hardship following parental divorce can make it difficult for children to cope. When divorced parents cannot achieve the same standard of living they had before divorce, feelings of loss may be amplified. If the family falls into poverty, the inability to meet basic needs is a potent threat to a child's well-being. Economic hardship can also disrupt previously established routines, leaving children feeling disconnected and adrift. If economic troubles force a family to move away from a familiar school and neighbourhood, disruption is greater still.

REDUCED CONTACT WITH THE NON-RESIDENTIAL PARENT

Children whose parents divorce are more likely to lose touch with their fathers than their mothers (Juby, Marcil-Gratton, and LeBourdais, 2005; Sinha, 2014b). It was once thought that contact with the non-residential parent had few effects on child outcomes and that the economic contributions of the non-residential parent mattered most (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999). Today, sociologists understand that the relationship between children and their non-residential parent is important for children's well-being, particularly when contact is not superficial. However, the nature of contact with a non-residential parent and its benefits to children are often determined by the amount of conflict between ex-spouses.

Non-residential fathers typically reduce contact with their children when they have ongoing conflict with their former spouse.

Children's well-being suffers most when parents persist in or escalate hostilities after divorce. Conversely, children benefit from contact with their non-residential parent when ex-spouses get along with each other. In short, it is not the amount of contact with a non-residential parent that makes a difference, but the degree of cooperation and commitment to shared parenting that determine whether such contact helps or hinders a child's adjustment to parental divorce (Sobolewski and King, 2005).

ADDITIONAL CHANGES IN FAMILY STRUCTURE

After divorce, parents may seek new partners. Up to one half of divorced parents subsequently remarry or cohabit. Scholars once thought that remarriage was a positive influence on children. But research now shows that a favourable outcome is often not the case. Many children living in step-parent households derive little benefit from the additional income and supervision that a step-parent brings. This lack of benefit occurs for several reasons. Because remarriages are often between people who have had previous unions, a new spouse may be supporting non-resident children from previous relationships, which reduces the financial resources available to the current household. After remarriage, children may find themselves competing with the step-parent for the attention of the biological parent. If new children are born into the union, older children may come to resent their newborn half-siblings or feel relegated to the outskirts of the family.

In addition, the entry of another adult figure into the household introduces the possibility that the new relationship will also fail. If that relationship breaks down, children who experience a second marital disruption may be particularly vulnerable. Researchers in Canada and the United States have found that children who experience multiple changes in family structure fare more poorly than do children who experience a single divorce in childhood (Fomby and Cherlin, 2007; Fomby and Sennott, 2013; Strohschein, Roos, and Brownell, 2009).

In sum, research suggests that the effects of parental divorce may be wide-ranging and long-lasting. Parents do not want divorce to harm their children. They typically go to great lengths to protect them. However, it is difficult to foresee all of the ways in which parental divorce will alter children's living conditions and life trajectories. That brings us back to our original question: Is there such a thing as a good divorce? When we examine the ways in which parental divorce can reduce the family's economic circumstances, downgrade the

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A high level of parental conflict creates long-term distress among children. If their parents divorce, children may escape a stressful environment, leading to post-divorce reduction in their aggression.

quality of the parent–child relationship, and open the door to further changes in family structure, it is clear that divorce often acts as a trigger for further disruptions. Some parents avoid such disruptions. Good divorces certainly take place. However, when disruptions accumulate and pervade daily life, the likelihood that children will cope well decreases dramatically (Amato, Kane, and James, 2011).

There appears to be only one situation in which children *always* fare better following divorce. In dysfunctional households that have a high level of parental conflict, children tend to experience a reduction in their aggressive behaviour after their parents split up (Morrison and Coiro, 1999; Strohschein, 2005). In such cases, parental divorce represents a relief from the tensions of an openly hostile environment.

Time for Review

- What demographic and social factors predict divorce?
- What further disruptions are commonly experienced by children whose parents divorce?
- Under what circumstances is a good divorce possible?

Reproduction

The transformation of marriage has been accompanied by an equally dramatic revolution in reproduction. Lifelong marriage, once the only socially sanctioned means for raising children, is today just one option available for those who desire to be parents. In the twenty-first century, parenthood often precedes marriage. Consequently, the average age at which women give birth to their first child is now younger than the average age at which women enter their first marriage. In addition, technological advances have weakened the link between sex and procreation. Oral contraceptives and safer abortion procedures allow women to dictate the circumstances under which child-bearing occurs. In vitro fertilization makes it possible to have a baby without the physical act of sex. In the following sections, we discuss the ways in which Canadian women exercise reproductive choice before describing the different types of households that children now grow up in.

Reproductive Choice

It is becoming increasingly expensive to raise children. On the family farm, children used to provide the family with economic benefits, but that is no longer the case. Because most women want to work in the paid labour force and many pursue a career, they tend to have fewer children, to have them further apart, and to have them starting at an older age. Some decide to have none at all (Ravanera and Beaujot, 2009).

A woman's decision not to have children may be carried out by means of contraception or abortion. Abortion was declared a criminal offence in Canada in 1892. In the 1960s, an abortion reform movement spearheaded by Dr. Henry Morgentaler urged the repeal of abortion laws that, in his words, "compelled the unwilling to bear the unwanted" (quoted in Dranoff, 2001: 16). In 1969, the law was changed to permit "therapeutic abortion" if performed by a physician in an accredited hospital and if a three-member committee certified that the continuation of the pregnancy would likely endanger the health of the mother. In 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the law on abortion on the grounds that it contravened a woman's right to control her own reproductive life. In 1993, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down legislation that banned abortion clinics. Today, abortion clinics operate in all Canadian provinces.

In 2018, the latest year for which data are available, 85 195 abortions took place in Canada (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2019a). Thus, the abortion rate in

Canada is approximately 12 per 1000 women between the ages of 15 and 44. Canada's abortion rate has been declining over time and remains far below the worldwide average of 35 per 1000 women aged 15–44 (Sedgh et al., 2016).

Attitudes toward abortion in Canada are mixed. Surveys consistently show that one-third of Canadian women believe that the life of a fetus should be protected at conception, one-third believe it should be protected at some point during pregnancy, and one-third believe that legal protection of the baby should start at birth (Kirkey, 2020). Abortion attitudes vary by age. Young adults are more likely than are older adults to approve of the availability of legal abortion for any reason (Bibby, 2001). Ninety percent of adults and 84 percent of teenagers support the availability of legal abortion when rape is involved.

Researchers argue that we would likely return to the situation that existed in the 1960s if abortion laws were repealed (Sedgh et al., 2012). In the 1960s, abortions were illegal, costly, difficult to obtain, and dangerous for women's health. Many researchers predict that women living in poverty and their unwanted children would suffer most if abortion laws were repealed. This situation would also lead to higher welfare and medical care costs for taxpayers.

Reproductive Technologies

For most women, exercising reproductive choice means using contraception and abortion to prevent pregnancy and birth. However, some women view it as using reproductive technologies to *facilitate* pregnancy and birth. Because of infertility, a declining number of desirable children available for adoption, and a persistent and strong desire by most people to have children, demand is increasing for methods to help infertile couples, single women, and some same-sex couples to have babies.

There are four main types of reproductive technologies. *Artificial insemination* involves inserting a donor's sperm into a woman's vaginal canal or uterus during ovulation. *Surrogate motherhood* involves using a donor's sperm to artificially inseminate a woman who has signed a contract to give up the child at birth in exchange for a fee. *In vitro fertilization* involves surgically removing eggs from a woman and joining them with sperm in a culture dish, with the resulting embryo being transferred back into the woman's uterus. Finally, specialists use various *screening techniques* on sperm and fetuses to increase the chance of giving birth to a baby of the desired sex and to end pregnancies considered as medically problematic.

SOCIAL, ETHICAL, AND LEGAL ISSUES

Reproductive technologies raise several sociological and ethical issues (Gerrits et al., 2013). First is discrimination. Most reproductive technologies are expensive. For example, surrogate mothers can charge $20 000 or more to carry a child. In vitro fertilization is costly, too. In 2010, Québec became the only jurisdiction in North America to cover the cost of in vitro fertilization. By 2015, the costs were deemed excessive: on average, $17 919 for women under the age of 35 and nearly $104 000 for women 43 or older (*CBC News*, 2015). Today, Québec is one of four provinces that partly subsidizes in vitro fertilization. Elsewhere in Canada, in vitro fertilization is available only to those who can afford it. In addition, some members of the medical profession discriminate against unmarried individuals and same-sex couples by denying them access to reproductive technologies. Thus, discrimination by the medical community occurs against those of modest means and against non-nuclear families.

By rendering the terms *mother* and *father* obsolete, or at least vague, reproductive technologies introduce a second problem. Who is the mother of the child, the person who donates the egg, the person who carries the child in her uterus, or the person who raises the child? And is the father the person who donates the sperm or the person who raises the child? Under the circumstances, a child conceived through a combination of reproductive technologies and raised by a heterosexual couple could have as many as three mothers and

two fathers! If this were just a problem of terminology, we could simply introduce new distinctions to reflect the new reality, such as *egg mother*, *uterine mother*, and *social mother*. In fact, the real problem is social and legal, since it is unclear who has what rights and obligations to the child, and what rights and obligations the child has in relation to each parent.

This lack of clarity has already caused anguished court battles over child custody. A British court may have set a precedent in this area. In 2011, the court allowed a surrogate mother to keep the baby she had carried even though she had signed a contract to hand it over to a couple for £4500 ($7400; Allen, Ellicott, and Eccles, 2011). In 2016, the first child with three parents was born. To prevent the child from inheriting a deadly genetic condition, a mother and father underwent a unique medical procedure. Doctors inserted the nucleus of the mother's egg into the egg of a healthy female donor that had its nucleus removed. The hybrid egg was then fertilized with the father's sperm and placed into the mother's uterus. In short, reproductive technologies have forced people to rethink the very nature of family and parenthood.

Determining who will control reproductive technologies and to what ends will require wide public debate. Reproductive technologies may bring the greatest joy to infertile people and hope to parents fearful of transferring debilitating genetic conditions to their children. They may also prevent the birth of children with diseases such as muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis. However, their prohibitive cost may make reproductive technologies accessible only to the well-to-do, reinforce traditional family forms that are no longer appropriate for many people, and cause protracted legal wrangling and heartache.

In the next few pages, we describe the different family configurations in which Canadian children may grow up. We begin, however, by considering zero-child families.

Zero-Child Families

Zero-child families are increasingly common in Canada. This clumsy term seems necessary because the alternatives are so value laden. A *childless family* implies that a family without children lacks something it should have, while the more recent *child-free family* suggests that a family without a child is unencumbered and that a child is therefore a burden. Although the term *zero-child families* is clumsy, it is neutral.

Roughly a fifth of North American women between the ages of 40 and 44 have never given birth (Ravanera and Beaujot, 2009). Circumstances beyond a couple's control, such as infertility, may have resulted in them not having a child. Evidence suggests that the rate of infertility is increasing, perhaps as a result of chemical pollutants in the air and water. However, it appears that not having a child is more often a matter of choice. The main reasons for the increasing prevalence of zero-child families are the rising expenses associated with raising a child and the availability of attractive alternatives.

Just how expensive are children? This is a matter for debate. In 2015, *Money Sense* magazine reported that it cost parents a whopping $257 022 to raise a child to the age of 19. This estimate does not include the cost of postsecondary education. In addition, there are non-economic costs when couples have a child, the most important of which is stress. When a child is born, couples must do more work in the home, give up free time and time together, develop a more efficient daily routine, and divide responsibilities. These requirements all present sources of potential disagreement and tension in daily life. Accordingly, it is not surprising that relationship satisfaction declines with a child in the house (Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2003).

Some couples are attracted by alternatives that decrease their desire to have a child. Zero-child families are more likely among couples with high income, a high level of education, and professional and managerial occupations. Couples in these categories tend to place especially high value on mobility, careers, and leisure-time pursuits. As a result, postponing having children to achieve other goals can turn a couple's waiting game into eventual acceptance of their permanent status as a zero-child family (Ravanera and Beaujot, 2014). Research shows that these adults are usually not frustrated or unhappy that they do not have a child. Although they tend to feel negatively stereotyped as selfish, they are also more likely to be satisfied with their marriage than are couples with a child (Lamanna and Riedmann, 2009).

Fertilizing an egg in vitro

dem10/iStockphoto

Lone-Parent Families

During the first half of the twentieth century, lone-parent families generally resulted because of the death of one parent. Today, solo parenting is usually the product of separation or divorce. A third route to lone parenthood involves single, never-married mothers who give birth to children on their own. The biological father may be in the picture, but he does not live with the child.

Today, about one in five children live in a lone-parent household (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Most lone-parent households are headed by women; however, the number of father-headed lone-parent households has been growing much faster than the number of mother-headed lone-parent households.

Step-Parent Families

About one in 10 children under the age of 14 lives in a step-parent family (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Simple step-parent families exist when only one adult has only one or more children from a prior union living in the household. A complex step-parent household exists when both adults have one or more children from a previous relationship living in the household or only one parent has one or more children from a prior relationship in the household, but new children are born into the household from the current relationship. Over the past 15 years, the proportion of simple step-parent families has declined while the proportion of complex step-parent families has increased (Vézina, 2012). Today, two-thirds of all step-parent families are complex.

CHILDREN IN SAME-SEX COUPLE HOUSEHOLDS

The children of same-sex couples can be the offspring of previous, heterosexual marriages, adopted, or the result of artificial insemination. Many people have concerns about children raised by same-sex parents, believing they will develop a confused sexual identity, become gay or lesbian themselves, and suffer discrimination from children and adults in the straight community. In the past, most of the research in this area was based on small, unrepresentative samples and therefore, was not entirely trustworthy.

More recently, nationally representative surveys find that children in same-sex parent households experience similar health, behavioural, and educational outcomes as

CP PHOTO/Clement Allard

In 2002, in a precedent-setting move hailed by gay-rights activists as the first of its kind in the world, full parental rights were extended to gay and lesbian couples in Québec. Here, a lesbian couple react as the Québec legislature passes the law.

children in different-sex parent households (Boertien and Bernardi, 2019; Potter and Potter, 2017; Reczek, 2020). Some studies find that differences vanish when families are matched in terms of socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and prior changes in family structure. These results suggest that children fare best when they are raised in homes where they have access to adequate financial resources, receive sufficient love and attention from their parents, and never experience change in their family structure. When these factors are in place, having parents who are of the same sex or the opposite sex is of no consequence for child well-being.

Time for Review

- How has technology facilitated the weakening of the link between reproduction and sex?
- Why is non-marital child-bearing a concern?
- In what ways have children's family structures become more diverse?

Family Policy

Now that we have discussed several aspects of the decline of the traditional nuclear family and the proliferation of varied forms of family, we can return to the big question posed at the beginning of this chapter: Is the decline of the nuclear family a bad thing for society? Do children who grow up with two biological parents—particularly with stay-at-home mothers—get the kind of discipline, role models, help, and middle-class lifestyle they need to stay out of trouble with the law and grow up to become well-adjusted, productive members of society? Conversely, are teenage crime, poverty, welfare dependency, and other social ills mainly the result of family forms other than the traditional nuclear family?

Research clearly indicates that although the decline of the traditional nuclear family can be a source of many social problems, it doesn't have to be that way (Brown, 2010; Berger and Carlson, 2020). The United States provides an example of how social problems can emerge from the decline of the nuclear family. Sweden illustrates how such problems can be averted. These two cases represent two models that Canadians should consider when thinking about our own family policies. The top panel of Table 14.2 shows that *on most indicators of nuclear family decline, Sweden leads the United States*. In Sweden, men and women get married at a later age than in the United States. Rates of non-marital child-bearing are higher in Sweden than in the United States. Compared with US women, a much larger proportion of Swedish women with children under the age of three work in the paid labour force.

The bottom panel of Table 14.2 shows that *on every measure of children's well-being, Sweden also leads the United States*. Children in Sweden score higher on reading performance scores than US children do. The child poverty rate is far lower in Sweden than it is in the United States. Public spending on families as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) is much higher in Sweden than in the United States. Moreover, the infant mortality rate and the youth suicide rate are far lower in Sweden than in the United States. Overall, then, the decline of the traditional nuclear family has gone further in Sweden than in the United States, but children are better off on average. How is this possible?

One explanation is that Sweden has something the United States lacks: a substantial family-support policy. When a child is born in Sweden, parents are entitled to a total of 16 months of parental leave that can be shared between them. Government benefits pay 80 percent of the parent's salary for the first 14 months, then a reduced rate for the final two months. Parents are entitled to free consultations at well-baby clinics. Temporary parental benefits are available for parents with a sick child under the age of 12. One parent can take

TABLE 14.2

The "Decline" of the Nuclear Family and the Well-Being of Children: The United States and Sweden Compared

Sources: Adapted from OECD 2018b. OECD Family Database. http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm

Indicators of Nuclear Family "Decline"	United States	Sweden	#1 "Decline"
Median age at first marriage			
Men	29.5	36.6	Sweden
Women	27.4	33.8	Sweden
Non-marital birth rate	39.8	54.9	Sweden
One-parent households with children ages <18 as % of all households with children ages <18	26.6	20.7	US
Percentage of mothers with children ages 0–14 in labour force	65.7	83.1	Sweden

Indicators of Child Well-Being	United States	Sweden	#1 "Well-Being"
Mean reading performance score at age 15	494	506	Sweden
Percentage of children in poverty	17.8	9.1	Sweden
Public spending on families as a percentage of GDP	1.1	3.5	Sweden
Infant mortality rate	5.8	2.4	Sweden
Suicide rate for children ages 15–19 (per 100 000)	8.9	6.4	Sweden

up to 60 days off work per sick child per year at 80 percent of his or her salary. All parents can send their children to heavily government-subsidized, high-quality day care.

Among rich countries, the United States stands at the other extreme. Since 1993, a parent has been entitled to 12 weeks of *unpaid* parental leave. There is no system of state day care. The value of the dependant deduction on income tax has fallen by nearly 50 percent in current dollars since the 1940s.

In short, when an unwed Swedish woman has a baby, she knows she can rely on state institutions to maintain her standard of living and help give her child an enriching social and educational environment. When an unwed US woman has a baby, she is pretty much on her own. She stands a good chance of sinking into poverty, with all the negative consequences that will have for her and her child.

Canada stands midway between these two extremes. In a study of 41 countries, Canada placed 18th on the number of weeks it allows new parents to take off work and did even more poorly in terms of generosity of maternity leave payments (Pew Research Center, 2016b). Excluding Québec, which enjoys much wider coverage, there are only enough regulated day-care spaces for one in every four children under the age of six in Canada today (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019). An international comparison of early childhood services placed Sweden at the top but ranked the United States and Canada near the bottom (UNICEF, 2008). Policy debates often revolve around the direction Canada should pursue in the future. Should Canadians move closer to the US or the Swedish model?

In Canada, people commonly raise three criticisms against generous family-support policies. First, some people say such policies encourage illegitimate births, long-term dependence on welfare, and the breakup of two-parent families. However, research shows that neither the divorce rate nor the rate of births to unmarried mothers is higher when welfare payments are more generous (Albelda and Tilly, 1997; Ruggles, 1997; Sweezy and Tiefenthaler, 1996).

A second criticism of generous family-support policies focuses on child care. Some critics say that non-family child care is bad for children under the age of three. In their view, only parents can provide the love, interaction, and intellectual stimulation that infants and toddlers need for proper social, cognitive, and moral development. However, when

studies compare family care and day care involving a strong curriculum, a stimulating environment, plenty of caregiver warmth, low turnover of well-trained staff, and a low ratio of caregivers to children, they find that day care has no negative consequences for children over the age of one (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber, and Fitzgerald, 1994; Harvey, 1999). Research also shows that day care has some benefits, notably enhancing a child's ability to make friends. The benefits of high-quality day care are even more evident in low-income families, which often cannot provide the kind of stimulating environment offered by high-quality day care (Cleveland, 2016).

The third criticism lodged against generous family-support policies is that they are expensive and need to be paid for by high taxes. That is true. Swedes, for example, pay higher taxes than just about anyone else in the world. They have made the political decision to pay high taxes partly to avoid the social problems and associated costs that emerge when the traditional nuclear family is replaced with other family forms and no institutions are available to help family members in need.

While few people want to pay higher taxes, it is important to note that generous family-support policies provide offsetting economic benefits. For example, Québec alone among Canadian provinces and territories has established an inexpensive, universally accessible, high-quality, provincially regulated day-care system not unlike Sweden's. Research shows that, since the inception of the program in 1997, it has enabled many women to enter the paid labour force, increased gender equality, helped to boost median household income by a third, and lowered the level of income inequality in the province (Gignac, 2014). We thus see that such a day-care system is beneficial not just for women and not just for families. It benefits society as a whole.

Time for Review

- What reasons do Canadians generally give for opposing generous family-support policies?
- What are the benefits of generous family-support policies?

Summary

1. **How does the traditional nuclear family differ from most contemporary Canadian families?**
   The traditional nuclear family consists of a married-parent household with at least one child, where the father is the provider and the mother is the homemaker. Today, such families are in the minority. Contemporary families are more structurally diverse.

2. **What is the functionalist theory of the family? According to conflict and feminist theorists, what are the problems with this theory?**
   The functionalist theory holds that the nuclear family is a distinct and universal family form because it performs five important functions: sexual regulation, economic cooperation, reproduction, socialization, and emotional support. The theory is most accurate in depicting families in North America in the two decades after World War II. Families in other places and other historical periods depart from the functional model in important respects. Marxists stress how families are tied to the system of capitalist ownership. They argue that only the elimination of capitalism can end gender inequality in families. Feminists note that gender inequality existed before capitalism and in communist societies. They stress how the patriarchal division of power and patriarchal norms reproduce gender inequality.

3. **How do patterns of couple formation in contemporary society differ from couple formation in the past?**
   In the past, marriages were arranged by families as a way of forging alliances between different kinship groups. As such, family needs and obligations took priority over personal preferences. Today, couples in most societies are expected to marry for love, and they spend significant amounts of time and effort to vet potential mates for physical and emotional compatibility. As the path from singlehood to marriage has become less linear and more ambiguous, new and emerging family forms have emerged.

4. **Is there such a thing as a good divorce?**
   Yes, but a good divorce can be difficult to achieve because it assumes that parents can accurately foresee and protect their children from the damaging effects of divorce. In actuality, parents often underestimate the amount of change that divorce brings into their lives. Whether children can adjust positively to divorce depends on the resources that can be drawn on, the occurrence of subsequent disruptions to their lives, and attitudes about the divorce. Disruptions such as a decline in living standard, estrangement from parents, and further changes in family structure make it difficult for children to cope well with parental divorce.

5. **What types of family structures do children experience in Canadian society?**
   The continuously married, two-biological-parent household has given way to a proliferation of new family forms. Non-marital child-bearing and divorce have increased the number of children who spend time in a lone-parent household. The desire to find intimacy with a new partner after divorce has resulted in a growing number of step-parent households. Similarly, growing acceptance of same-sex relationships has increased the number of children raised in such settings.

6. **What sorts of policies can countries adopt to accommodate different family forms?**
   People sometimes blame the decline of the traditional nuclear family for poverty, welfare dependence, and crime. However, some countries have adopted policies that largely prevent these problems. Therefore, these social problems are in a sense a political choice.

15 Religion

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Contrast religion's ability to create societal cohesion and reinforce social inequality with its ability to promote social conflict and social change.
- Evaluate the secularization thesis, which holds that the influence of religion on society is weakening.
- Assess the market theory of religion as an alternative to the secularization thesis.
- Describe the degree to which religious freedom and tolerance are under threat in some parts of the world.
- Identify social factors associated with religiosity.

Religion and Society

Robert Brym started writing the first draft of this chapter just after returning from a funeral. "Roy was a fitness nut," says Robert, "and cycling was his sport. One perfect summer day, he was out training with his team. I wouldn't be surprised if the sunshine and vigorous exercise turned his thoughts to his good fortune. At 41, he was a senior executive in a medium-sized mutual funds firm. His boss, who treated him like a son, was grooming him for the presidency of the company. Roy had three vivacious children, ranging in age from 1 to 10, and a beautiful, generous, and highly intelligent wife. He was active in community volunteer work and everyone who knew him admired him. But on this particular summer day, he suddenly didn't feel well. He dropped back from the pack and then suffered a massive heart attack. Within minutes, he was dead.

"During *shiva,* the ritual week of mourning following the death of a Jew, hundreds of people gathered in the family's home and on their front lawn. I had never felt such anguish before. When we heard the steady, slow, clear voice of Roy's 10-year-old son solemnly intoning the mourner's prayer, we all wept. And we asked ourselves and one another the inevitable question: Why?"

In 1902, the great psychologist William James observed that this question lies at the root of all religious belief. Religion helps us cope with the terrifying reality that we must die (James, 1976 [1902]: 116). By offering us immortality, the promise of better times to come, and the security of compassionate spirits who watch over us, religion provides a response to the fact that we all stand at the edge of an abyss. In short, religion provides meaning and purpose in a world that might otherwise seem cruel and senseless.

Although the motivation for religion may be psychological, as James argued, the content and strength of our religious beliefs, as well as the form and frequency of our religious practices, are influenced by the structure of society and our place in it. It is the task of the sociologist of religion to interpret the many forms the religious impulse can take. Why is religious belief more powerful at some times than others? When does religion act as a source of social stability, when as a force for social change? Is the world becoming more or less religious? Is the world becoming more or less tolerant toward religious diversity? Sociologists of religion have studied all these questions, and we touch on them in this chapter. Note that we will not explore the truth of religion in general or the value of any particular religious belief or practice, since these are questions of faith, not science. They lie outside the province of sociology.

The cover of *Time* magazine once asked, "Is God Dead?" As a sociological observation, the answer is clear. In Canada, about seven in ten adults believe in God or a universal spirit. According to this measure (and according to other measures we will explore below), God is very much alive. Nonetheless, there is also evidence that the scope of religious authority has declined in Canada and in other parts of the world, and that religion rules fewer aspects of life than it did previously. Some Canadians still turn to religion to deal with their problems, but more and more Canadians now see a limited role for religion. As the scope of religious authority has declined, other institutions, such as medicine, criminal justice, and education, have grown in importance.

Religion gives meaning to life and helps us cope with the terrifying fact that we must die.

Eugen Thome/Shutterstock

At the same time, religious issues continue to intrude on public life. Governments cannot avoid being drawn into debates about religion because they are often framed in the language of rights. When religious rights are pitted against other rights, the government faces the difficult task of finding an acceptable solution. Its decisions often influence our lives. As we will see, religion is far from being only a private matter (see Box 15.1).

Although a growing number of Canadians say they are not religious, other evidence points to a religious awakening in some quarters.

BOX 15.1 Social Policy

A BAN ON RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

In 2019, Québec became the first jurisdiction in North America to impose a ban on religious symbols in public places. The new law forbids many public service workers from wearing religious symbols such as hijabs, turbans, or crosses when they are on duty. The law also requires all people to uncover their faces for identification purposes when receiving public services. According to the government, the decision to ban religious symbols is based on four principles: the separation of state and religion, the religious neutrality of the state, the equality of all citizens, and freedom of conscience and religion. The government also claimed the ban will promote gender equality by empowering women whose religion compels them to cover their faces (Shingler, 2019).

Although the new law was supported by the majority of Quebeckers, many groups believe the ban infringes their constitutional rights. One school board contends minority language education would be harmed if it could not hire teachers who wear religious symbols. Others argue the new law violates Canadians' charter rights of freedom of conscience and religion because it will force public workers to choose between their religion and their job. Religious groups contest their treatment as second-class citizens, arguing that they will no longer be treated as equal under the law. A civil rights group protests the ban on the grounds it disproportionately affects women's rights to exercise freedom of religion. They say the requirement to remove face coverings when receiving public serves singles out Muslim women. Women who refuse to remove their face covering will be isolated from public life: They will be unable to work in the public sector, travel on public transportation, and obtain health care.

One major obstacle for groups opposed to the ban on religious symbols is that the government of Québec has invoked the notwithstanding clause. This means that fundamental freedoms listed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms can't be used as the basis for challenging the law as unconstitutional. To date, no court challenge has proved successful in overturning the ban.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What rights do you think Canadians should have when it comes to their religion? Is it possible to find a balance between the right to religion and the right to be free from religion?
2. Do you think the disappearance of religion in the public sphere will contribute to its eventual demise?

For instance, new religious movements are springing up, attracting converts daily. Moreover, fundamentalist and conservative religious traditions are gaining strength as liberal traditions become less appealing. Some sociologists have argued that viewing the field of religion as a kind of market comprising "sellers" and "buyers" of religious services can help us to understand how and why an overall pattern of decline in religious observance can be seen alongside growing religious intensity.

Before we address the issues just noted, let us see how the founding fathers of sociology and some important contemporary innovators in the field have treated the issue of religion in society.

Theoretical Approaches to the Sociology of Religion

Durkheim's Functionalist Approach

More than one person has said that hockey is Canada's "national religion." Do you agree with that opinion? Before making up your mind, consider that 80 percent of Canadians tuned in to at least part of the gold medal men's hockey game between Canada and the United States at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, making them the largest TV audience in Canadian history.

Apart from drawing a huge audience, the Stanley Cup playoffs generate a sense of what Durkheim called "collective effervescence." That is, the Stanley Cup excites us by making us feel part of something larger than we are: the Montréal Canadiens, the Edmonton Oilers, the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Vancouver Canucks, the Calgary Flames, the Ottawa

Senators, the Winnipeg Jets, the institution of Canadian hockey, the spirit of Canada itself. For many hours each year, hockey enthusiasts transcend their everyday lives and experience intense joy by sharing the sentiments and values of a larger collective. In their fervour, they banish thoughts of their own mortality. They glimpse eternity as they immerse themselves in institutions that will outlast them and athletic feats that people will remember for generations to come.

So do you think the Stanley Cup playoffs are a religious event? There is no god of the Stanley Cup. Nonetheless, the Stanley Cup playoffs meet Durkheim's definition of a religious experience. According to Durkheim, people come to share common thoughts and values when they live together. These common thoughts and values in turn form a **collective conscience** that is larger than any individual's. When we experience the collective conscience directly, we are able to distinguish the transcendent world of the **sacred** from the everyday world of the **profane**. We designate certain objects as symbols of the sacred. Durkheim called these symbols **totems**. We also create certain public practices to connect us with the sacred. Durkheim referred to these practices as **rituals**. According to Durkheim, rituals in particular and religion in general function to reinforce social solidarity.

The collective conscience comprises the common sentiments and values that people share as a result of living together.

The sacred refers to the religious, transcendent world.

The profane refers to the secular, everyday world.

Totems are objects that symbolize the sacred.

Rituals in Durkheim's usage are public practices designed to connect people to the sacred.

Research linking major sporting events to suicide rates support Durkheim's theory (Andriessen and Krysinska, 2009; Bozsonyi et al., 2016). For example, the suicide rate in the United States is lower on Super Bowl Sunday than it is on other Sundays (Joiner, Hollar, and Van Orden, 2006), while suicide rates for younger Frenchmen dipped when France hosted the FIFA World Cup (Encrenaz et al., 2012). Similarly, from 1951 to 1992, young men in Québec were more likely to commit suicide when the Montréal Canadiens were eliminated early from the Stanley Cup playoffs (Trovato, 1998). These patterns support Durkheim's theory of suicide, which predicts a lower suicide rate when social solidarity increases and a higher suicide rate when social solidarity decreases (Chapter 1, A Sociological Compass).

Durkheim would consider the Stanley Cup and the team insignia to be totems. The insignias represent groups we identify with. The trophy signifies the qualities that professional hockey stands for: competitiveness, sportsmanship, excellence, and the value of teamwork. The hockey games themselves are public rituals enacted according to strict rules and conventions. We suspend our everyday lives as we watch the ritual unfold. The ritual heightens our experience of belonging to certain groups, increases our respect for certain institutions, and strengthens our belief in certain ideas. These groups, institutions, and ideas all transcend us. Thus, the Stanley Cup playoffs may be regarded as a sacred event in Durkheim's terms. They cement society in the way Durkheim said all religions do (Durkheim, 1976 [1915]). Do you agree with this Durkheimian interpretation of the Stanley Cup playoffs? Do you see any parallels between the Durkheimian analysis of the Stanley Cup playoffs and sports in your community or school?

From a Durkheimian point of view, the Stanley Cup playoffs can be considered a religious ritual.

Sergei Bachlakov/Shutterstock

Religion, Feminist Theory, and Conflict Theory

Although Durkheim's functionalist theory of religion offers useful insights into the role of religion in society, conflict and feminist theorists offer two main criticisms against it. First, Durkheim's theory exaggerates religion's role in maintaining social cohesion since, in reality, religion often provokes social conflict. Second, his theory ignores the fact that, when religion does increase social cohesion, it often reinforces social inequality.

Religion and Social Inequality

Let us first explore the role of major world religions and social inequality. The first world religions, Judaism and Hinduism, originated 3800 to 4000 years ago. Unfortunately, little historical evidence helps us understand social conditions at that time. In contrast, historical evidence surrounding the rise of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam between 2700 and 1500 years ago tells us that adversity in this world often encouraged the impulse to find a better world. In addition, we know that Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Buddha all promoted a message of equality and freedom (see Table 15.1 for an overview of the five major world religions).

We also know that the "charismatic" leadership of the world religions became "routinized" over generations. Weber used the term **routinization of charisma** to describe the transformation of divine enlightenment into a permanent feature of everyday life. This transformation consists of turning religious inspiration into a stable social institution with defined roles, such as interpreters of the divine message, teachers, dues-paying laypeople, and so forth. With the routinization of charisma, religion typically becomes less responsive to the needs of ordinary people, and social inequalities and injustices become more prominent, as you will now see.

The **routinization of charisma** is Weber's term for the transformation of divine enlightenment into a permanent feature of everyday life.

RELIGION AND THE SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN

Marx called religion "the opium of the people" (Marx, 1970 [1843]: 131). He emphasized that religion often tranquilizes the underprivileged into accepting their lot in life.

Evidence for Marx's interpretation comes from many times, places, and institutions. For example, as feminists note, the major world religions have traditionally reinforced patriarchy by placing women in a subordinate position. Consider the following scriptural examples of the subordination of women:

- Corinthians in the *New Testament* emphasizes that "women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church."
- The *Sidur,* the Jewish prayer book, includes this morning prayer, which is recited by Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox men: "Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who did not make me a woman."
- The *Qur'an,* the holy book of Islam, contains a Book of Women in which it is written that "righteous women are devoutly obedient. ... As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them, refuse to share their beds, beat them."

It is also significant that Catholic priests and Muslim mullahs must be men, as must Jewish rabbis in the Conservative and Orthodox denominations. However, the major world religions are becoming less patriarchal in many parts of the world. Vibrant feminist movements exist among Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox Jews, and so on. Women have been allowed to serve as Protestant ministers since the mid-nineteenth century and as rabbis in the more liberal branches of Judaism since the 1970s. The United Church of Canada, Canada's largest Protestant denomination, has ordained more women than men since 2010. It is expected that there will be more female than male ministers in the United Church of Canada by 2030 (United Church of Canada, 2018). In the meantime, there is a serious shortage of male candidates for the priesthood among Roman Catholics, perhaps portending change in that church as well.

RELIGION AND CLASS INEQUALITY

Just as the world's great religions often supported gender inequality after becoming routinized, they often supported class inequality. For example, Christianity in medieval and early modern Europe endorsed the view that the Almighty decrees class inequality, promising rewards to the lowly only in the afterlife ("the meek shall inherit the earth"). Similarly, Hindu scriptures state that the highest caste sprang from the lips of the supreme

TABLE 15.1

The Five World Religions: Origins, Beliefs, and Divisions

Sources: Boteach (2012); Fenn (2013); Gajjar (2013); Goldberg (2013); Heine (2013); Kemp (2013); Sharify-Funk and Dickson (2013)

	Origins	Beliefs	Divisions
Judaism	Judaism originated about 4000 years ago in what is now Iraq, when Abraham first asserted the existence of just one God. About 800 years later, Moses led the Jews out of Egyptian bondage. The emancipation of the Jews from slavery was a defining moment in the history of Judaism.	The central teachings rest on belief in one God (Yahweh) and on the idea that God sanctions freedom and equality. The 613 divine commandments (*mitzvot*) mentioned in the Five Books of Moses (Torah) form the core of orthodox Jewish practice The *mitzvot* include prescriptions for justice, righteousness, and observance: rest and pray on the Sabbath, honour the old and the wise, do not wrong a stranger in buying or selling, do not seek revenge or hold a grudge, etc. The Torah forms part of the Old Testament.	In seventeenth-century Eastern Europe, ecstatic Chasidic sects broke away from the bookish Judaism of the time. In nineteenth-century Germany, the Reform movement allowed prayer in German, the integration of women in worship, etc. Orthodox Judaism was a reaction against the liberalizing tendencies of Reform and involved a return to traditional observance. Conservative Judaism crystallized in Britain and the United States in the nineteenth century to reconcile what its practitioners regarded as the positive elements in Orthodoxy with the dynamism of Reform. Reconstructionism is a liberal twentieth-century movement known for its social activism and gender egalitarianism.
Christianity	Christianity originated about 35 CE in what is now Israel. Jesus, a poor Jew, criticized the Judaism of his time for its external conformity to tradition and ritual at the expense of developing a true relationship to God as demanded by the prophets.	Believe in God and love him; love your neighbour—these are the two main lessons of Jesus. These teachings were novel because they demanded that people match outward performance with inner conviction. It was not enough not to murder. People could not even hate. Nor was it enough not to commit adultery. People could not even lust after a neighbour's wife (Matthew V, 21–30). These teachings made Jesus anti-authoritarian and even revolutionary. Admonishing people to love their neighbours impressed upon them the need to emancipate slaves and women. Christians retained the Jewish Bible as the Old Testament, adding the gospels and letters of the apostles as the New Testament.	In 312 CE, the Roman Emperor converted to Christianity and turned Christianity into a state religion, after which the Church became the dominant institution in Europe. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther, a German priest, challenged the Christian establishment by seeking to establish a more personal relationship between the faithful and God. His ideas quickly captured the imagination of half of Europe and led to the split of Christianity into Catholicism and Protestantism. In the Middle Ages, Christianity had split into Western and Eastern halves, the former centred in Rome, the latter in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). Various Orthodox churches today derive from the Eastern tradition. Protestantism has been especially prone to splintering because it emphasizes the individual's relationship to God rather than a central authority. Today, there are hundreds of different Protestant churches.
Islam	Islam originated about 600 CE in what is now Saudi Arabia. The powerful merchants of Mecca had become greedy and corrupt, impoverishing and enslaving many people. Also, fear grew that the Persian and Roman Empires might soon fall, bringing the end of the world. Into this crisis stepped Muhammad, who claimed to have visions from God.	People who profess Islam have five duties. At least once in their life, they must recite the Muslim creed aloud, correctly, with full understanding, and with heartfelt belief. (The creed is "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.") Five times a day, they must worship in a religious service. They must fast from sunrise to sunset every day during the ninth month of the lunar calendar (Ramadan). They must give charity to the poor. And at least once in their life, they must make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. Muhammad's teachings were written down in the holy scriptures known as the Qur'an.	Muslims split into two factions over a dispute as to who would be Muhammad's successor. The Sunni argued the successor should be an elected member of a certain Meccan tribe, whereas the Shi'a preferred Muhammad's direct descendant. Today, most Muslims are Sunni. Wahhabism, a Sunni fundamentalist movement, originated in the eighteenth century and is the state religion of Saudi Arabia. It rejects the teachings of any one but Muhammad and bans the worship of Islamic historical religious sites. Most Shi'a Muslims, concentrated in Iran, southern Iraq, and Bahrain, are "Twelvers"; they follow the teachings of 12 infallible imams (preachers) descended from Muhammad, the last of whom, they believe, will one day be revealed as the ultimate saviour of humanity. Different Shi'a offshoots disagree over who qualifies as a perfect imam. Thus, Ismailis are "Seveners" and Zaidi are "Fivers." Sufism is a mystical sect within Shi'a Islam.

Continued

TABLE 15.1 (CONTINUED)

Hinduism	Hinduism originated about 2000 BCE in India in unknown circumstances. It had no single founder.	Hinduism has many gods, all of which are aspects of the one true God. There is no single holy book, but rather a collection of different texts, including four Vedas that contain hymns, incantations, and rituals. Hindus are also guided by epic poems such as the *Bhagavad Gita*. Only the body dies in Hindu belief. The soul returns in a new form after death. The form in which it returns depends on how a person lives. Hindus believe that people who live in a way that is appropriate to their position in society will live better future lives. People may reach a state of spiritual perfection (*nirvana*) that allows the soul to escape the cycle of birth and rebirth, and reunite with God. But people who do not live in a way that is appropriate to their position in society supposedly live an inferior life when they are reincarnated. These ideas made upward social mobility nearly impossible because, according to Hindu belief, striving to move out of our station in life ensures reincarnation in a lower form.	Unlike the Western religions, Hinduism assimilates rather than excludes other religious beliefs and practices. Traditionally, Western religions rejected non-believers unless they converted. God tells Moses on Mount Sinai, "You shall have no other gods before me." In contrast, in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says that "whatever god a man worships, it is I who answer the prayer." This attitude of acceptance helped Hinduism absorb many of the ancient religions of the peoples on the Indian subcontinent. It also explains the wide regional and class variations in Hindu beliefs and practices. Hinduism as it is practised bears the stamp of many other religions.
Buddhism	About 480–400 BCE, Siddhartha Gautama Sakya, a young prince, left his life of privilege to seek the meaning of life. He was dissatisfied with the instruction he received from leading Hindu teachers and objected to what he regarded as the stale ritualism of Hinduism. Seeking to achieve a direct relationship with God, he came to be known as Buddha, "the awakened one." He rejected Hindu ideas of caste and reincarnation, and offered a new way for everyone to achieve spiritual enlightenment, promising salvation to everyone.	Buddha promoted the "Four Noble Truths": (1) Life is suffering. Moments of joy are overshadowed by sorrow. (2) All suffering derives from the inability to see the world as it really is. (3) Suffering ceases by training ourselves to eliminate desire, aversion, and delusion. (4) The path to end suffering requires undertaking a moral life, meditating, and achieving wisdom. Buddhism does not presume the existence of one true god. Rather, it holds out the possibility of everyone becoming a god of sorts. Similarly, it does not have a central church or text, such as the Bible.	Buddhism is notable for the diversity of its beliefs and practices. Buddhism spread rapidly across Asia after India's ruler adopted it as his own religion in the third century BCE. He sent missionaries to convert people in Tibet, Cambodia (Kampuchea), Nepal, Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), Myanmar (formerly Burma), China, Korea, and Japan. The influence of Buddhism in the land of its birth started to die out after the fifth century CE and is negligible in India today. One of the reasons for the popularity of Buddhism in East and Southeast Asia is that Buddhism is often able to co-exist with local religious practices. Unlike Western religions, Buddhism does not insist on holding a monopoly on religious truth.

creator, the next highest caste from his shoulders, the next highest from his thighs, and the lowest, "polluted" caste from his feet. They warn that attempting to achieve upward mobility results in being reincarnated as an animal. And the Qur'an says that social inequality is due to the will of Allah (Surah al-An'am 6:165).

RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT

A church is a bureaucratic religious organization that has accommodated itself to mainstream society and culture.

In sociological terms, a **church** is a bureaucratic religious organization that has accommodated itself to mainstream society and culture. As noted, church authorities often support gender and class inequality. However, religiously inspired protest against inequality periodically erupts from below.

A famous example of such protest occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, when Black churches spearheaded the American civil rights movement (Morris, 1984). Ministers of Black churches formed the civil rights movement's leadership, while members of their congregations marched, boycotted, and engaged in other forms of protest. Some White segregationists reacted with deadly violence, but public opinion was shifting. In 1964, laws disallowed the segregation of Blacks and Whites in public places, changing the US South forever. Religion had played a major role in promoting the conflict needed to make the South a more egalitarian and racially integrated place, even though it still remains far from the religious ideal.

Closer to home, it is worth remembering the important role played in the creation of Canada's health-care system and our social welfare network by the radical Christianity of the early twentieth-century Social Gospel movement. The Social Gospel movement took on force in the depths of the Great Depression (1929–39). It emphasized that Christians should be as concerned with improving the here and now as with life in the hereafter. The efforts of Tommy Douglas, a Baptist minister with an MA in sociology, the leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (precursor of the New Democratic Party), and the father of medicare in Canada, exemplify the Social Gospel's concern with social justice. In Canada too, then, religion has sometimes promoted conflict and change.

In short, religion can preserve social order under some circumstances, as Durkheim held. It often reinforces social inequality when it does so. Under other circumstances, however, religion can promote social conflict and social change (see Box 15.2).

Weber and the Problem of Social Change: A Symbolic Interactionist Interpretation

While Durkheim highlighted the contributions of religion to social order, Max Weber emphasized the contributions of religion to social change. Weber used a memorable image to capture the core of his argument: History is like a train, pushed along its tracks by economic and political interests, while religious ideas are like railroad switches, determining exactly which tracks the train will follow (Weber, 1946: 280).

In his short book *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism,* Weber illustrated his argument. He set out to explain the rise of modern capitalism by recognizing the "fundamental importance of the economic factor" in his explanation, just as Marx did (Weber, 1958 [1904–05]: 26). But Weber also used what we would call a symbolic interactionist interpretation of religion to prove that any exclusively economic interpretation was one-sided. (The term "symbolic interactionism" was not introduced into sociology until more than half a century later, but Weber's focus on the worldly significance of the meanings people attach to religious ideas makes him a forerunner of the symbolic interactionist tradition.)

Weber argued that, for specifically religious reasons, followers of the Protestant theologian John Calvin focused on engaging in intense worldly activity and displaying industry, punctuality, and frugality in their everyday life. According to men like John Wesley and Benjamin Franklin, people could ensure a state of grace and reduce their religious doubts by working industriously and living simply. Many Protestants took up this idea, which Weber called the Protestant ethic (Weber, 1958 [1904–5]: 183). According to Weber, capitalism

BOX 15.2 Sociology and the Media

THE TWO POPES

Peter Mountain/© Netflix/courtesy Everett Collection/The Canadian Press

Afraid of offending audiences and advertisers, television has traditionally shied away from characters that are overtly religious. When featured, religious characters have tended to be depicted stereotypically. One such example is born-again Christian Ned Flanders on *The Simpsons*. Ned's overly pious nature habitually annoys his neighbour, Homer Simpson, and even exasperates his pastor, Reverend Lovejoy.

Religion has sometimes popped up in reality TV shows that curiously peer into the lives of extreme religious groups. *Sister Wives*, for example, reveals the complicated lives of a polygamous family, who belong to an offshoot of the Church of Latter Day Saints. While the premise of this show is that polygamous families struggle with many of the same issues as other families, some TV shows take a more critical perspective. This includes the wildly popular *The Handmaid's Tale*, based on the best-selling novel by Canada's Margaret Atwood. Set in the near future of the United States, it presents a totalitarian theocracy, in which religion is used to legitimate the sexual subjugation of women.

The Two Popes, available on Netflix, adopts a more serious stance. The film fictionalizes a pivotal moment in the Roman Catholic Church. In 2013, Pope Benedict XVI stepped away from the papacy, the first pope to do so in nearly 600 years. Because a pope is expected to hold the position until death, Benedict's resignation raised questions about how the Church might handle two living popes in its midst.

The beautifully acted film, starring multiple-award-winners Anthony Hopkins and Jonathan Pryce, captures the imagined relationship between Pope Benedict and his successor, Pope Francis, during the transition. Initially, the two men are at loggerheads personally and philosophically, but the need for a smooth succession forces them to work through their differences. When they slowly learn to extend grace to each other, the message of the film comes into focus: Opposing factions in the Church should put aside enmity and find common ground.

The film bears little resemblance to reality. Reportedly, the Church is on the verge of a factional split, divided by supporters of each pope. After he retired, Benedict was supposed to live out his days quietly in a distant monastery—but he never left the Vatican. He now lives adjacent to the current pope. He retains the title of "His Holiness" and is involved in the church's day-to-day affairs. More worryingly, the ultra-conservative Benedict has not hesitated to weigh in on topics where he disagrees with the more liberally minded Pope Francis.

In particular, the ongoing priest sex abuse scandal has brought the contentious relationship between the two popes into the open. Benedict blames a permissive sexual culture for priestly wrongdoing and advocates the church's return to tradition and doctrine. As a social reformer, Pope Francis observes fault lies in the power structure of a church that lacks accountability and should be purged of its outdated traditions. As perspectives become more polarized, the ending promised in *The Two Popes* seems vanishingly distant.

Sociologists would point out that even though religion may inspire people to look beyond their earthly existence, religious institutions always have one foot anchored in the world. That's because religious organizations are built and organized by humans and thus riven with the same divisions and debates that exist everywhere.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways are religious institutions comparable to business organizations? How are they different?
2. Do divisions among church leaders contribute to public cynicism and disillusionment with religion?

flourished especially vigorously where economic conditions were favourable *and* where the Protestant ethic took root.

Later research found that the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the strength of capitalist development is weaker than Weber thought. Catholicism has coexisted with vigorous capitalist growth in some areas, and Protestantism has been associated with relative economic stagnation in other areas (Samuelsson, 1961 [1957]). Nevertheless,

Weber's argument that religious factors often underlie social change is a helpful counterpoint to Durkheim's focus on religion as a source of social stability. Along with Durkheim's work, Weber's argument stands as one of the most important insights into the influence of religion on society.

Time for Review

- What evidence supports the idea that hockey is a religion in Canada?
- On what grounds do conflict and feminist theorists criticize Durkheim's theory of religion?
- How does Weber's concept of the Protestant ethic enhance our understanding of the rise of modern capitalism?

The Decline of Religion

Although some scholars are interested in the origins of religion (Maryanski, 2019; Wilson, 2002), it is the future of religion that captures the attention of most people. We now consider that issue.

The Secularization Thesis

The **secularization thesis** says that religious institutions, actions, and consciousness are on the decline worldwide and will one day likely disappear altogether.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Weber commented that the world had become "disenchanted," with scientific and other forms of rationalism replacing religious authority. He, along with Durkheim, Marx, and others, developed what came to be known as the **secularization thesis**. According to the secularization thesis, religious institutions, actions, and consciousness are fading in importance and will eventually lose their significance altogether (Norris and Inglehart, 2011; Tschannen, 1991).

Although a sociological consensus about secularization was evident in the 1980s, it began to fall apart in the 1990s. That was because the secularization hypothesis became increasingly out of touch with what was happening in the world. Some of its basic tenets were demonstrably false. One leading sociologist of religion famously recanted (Berger, 1999), and another declared secularization a failed theory that deserved to be buried once and for all (Stark, 1999).

The **revised secularization thesis** holds that the importance of religion is diminishing in some parts of the world while remaining stable or declining in other parts.

As it turns out, the proposed burial of secularization theory also proved premature. Today, sociologists are more likely to suggest that secularization should be understood as a tendency rather than an iron law (Norris and Inglehart, 2011). The **revised secularization thesis** directs researchers to explore why the scope of religious authority and religious adherence are declining in some parts of the world but stable or rising in other parts (Gorski and Altinordu, 2008; Turner, 2011). Let's explore some of the ways traditional secularization theory has fallen short.

First, traditional secularization theory stated that all societies undergo a process called differentiation, where worldly institutions break off from the institution of religion over time (Tschannen, 1991). One such worldly institution is the education system. On the surface, we might conclude that differentiation has occurred. Whereas religious bodies once ran schools and institutions of higher learning, today's educational systems are run almost exclusively by non-religious authorities. Moreover, the educational system is generally concerned with worldly affairs rather than with spiritual matters.

A closer look, however, suggests that the divide between religion and the educational system is murky. In Canada, education is a provincial and territorial responsibility, which means funding for religious education varies. Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario fully fund Catholic schools. Six provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba,

Ontario, and Québec) pay for about half of the budget of religious schools that meet certain criteria (van Pelt, 2018). Québec requires all students to take a course in religion and ethics. Elsewhere in Canada, religious instruction is optional. Thus, religion has yet to completely sever its ties to the education system.

Importantly, much evidence shows that religious groups and the state make incursions on each other's territory when it suits their interests. In the United States, conservative Christian groups contribute heavily to the political campaigns of candidates who share their worldview. During the twentieth century, the Catholic Church played a critically important role in undermining communism in Poland, and Catholic "liberation theology" animated the successful fight against right-wing governments in Latin America (Kepel, 1994 [1991]; Smith, 1991). Ultra-Orthodox Jews have been important players in Israeli political life, often holding the balance of power in government (Kimmerling, 2003).

In other places, religious groups have successfully imposed religious rule. An Islamic revival originating in Iran swept through the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Asia beginning in the late 1970s, replacing secular rule of law with Islamic religious law (*shari'a*). The shift to *shari'a* law gained momentum following 9/11. For example, Bahrain, which had widely adopted Western ways of dress and lifestyle, subsequently banned Western garb, particularly for women, and retreated sharply into traditional practices (Pandya, 2012).

Conversely, in some instances, the state co-opts the functions of the church. Prior to the 1917 revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church was closely allied with the state. Following the revolution, the Soviet Union tried to eliminate religion altogether by taking over church property, prohibiting religious artifacts, and jailing or murdering church officials and believers.

When the Soviet Union crumbled in the late 1980s, Russia's new leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, restored religious freedom. Church activities were once again permitted. Did this mean that the church was free to operate independently? Not at all. Instead, the Russian Orthodox Church, reverting to its previous function as an arm of the state, was used for propaganda purposes to generate national pride and bolster support for political leaders. Today, faith and patriotism remain fused (Adamsky, 2019). For example, President Vladimir Putin evoked religious sentiment to justify the annexation of Crimea, arguing the region holds as much value to Russians as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem does to Muslims and Jews (Pinkham, 2017).

Thus far, our evaluation of the secularization thesis has focused on social institutions. However, the traditional secularization thesis also contends that religion will hold less appeal for *individuals*. Supposedly, science, with its insistence on rigorous empirical standards for proof, provides a better explanation for worldly phenomena than does religion, so religion loses its plausibility.

How does the traditional secularization thesis fare in predicting declining rates of religious affiliation? Figure 15.1 displays the predicted changes in religious affiliation by 2050 for the major religious groups, comparing numbers on the left and share of the global population on the right. Nearly every religious group will increase its numbers over the next few decades, but because population growth will increase even more quickly, some religious groups will make up a smaller percentage of the world population than they do today. Christianity will remain the largest religious group in 2050, but Islam, the world's fastest growing religion, will nearly close the gap. Note, too that the religiously unaffiliated will also decline as a share of the world population.

Another way to assess the secularization thesis would be to evaluate changes in **religiosity**. (Religiosity refers to how important religion is to people.) People may say they belong to a particular religious organization but might never attend religious services. Here, too, inspection of differences around the world reveals wide variation in religious behaviour (see Figure 15.2). Focusing on those religions where regular communal worship services is the norm (Buddhists and Hindus only attend communal services on infrequent holy days), we see that weekly attendance at a religious service is generally high in Africa but low in Russia, China, and Sweden. We cannot say that people everywhere have abandoned religion.

Religiosity refers to how important religion is to people.

Consider, too, the growing divide between how people think about religiosity and spirituality. Even if people are increasingly likely to reject the trappings of traditional

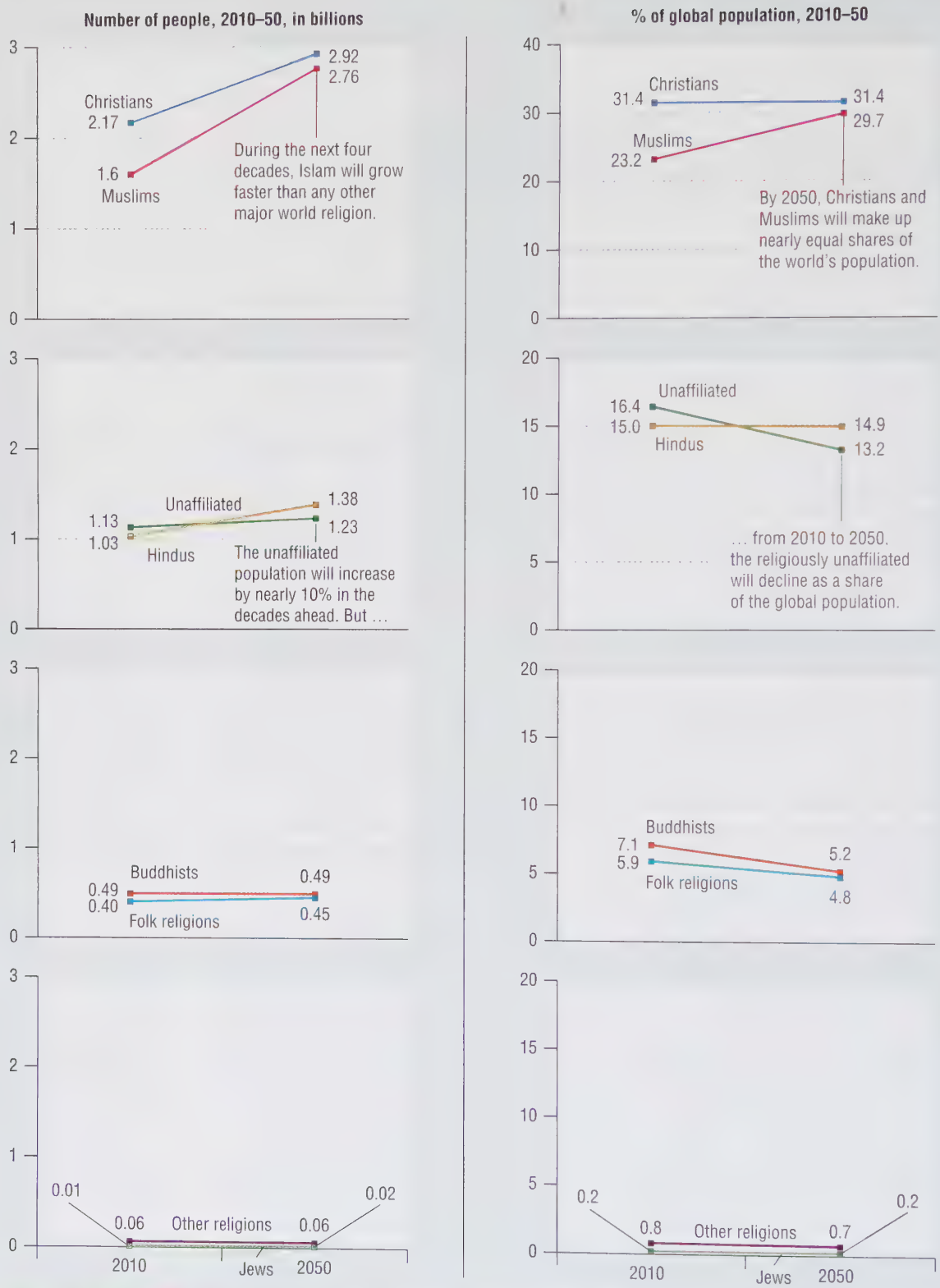
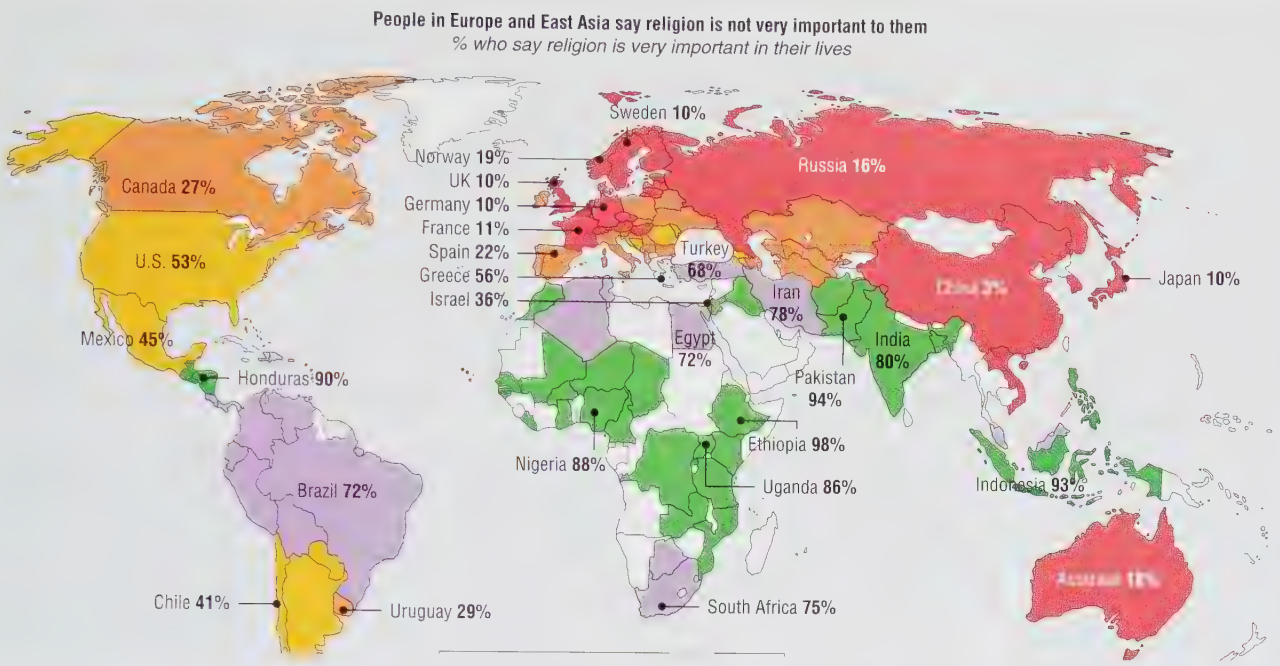


FIGURE 15.1

Predicted Changes in the Number of People and Share of Global Population, World's Major Religions

Source: Pew Research Center (2015)



Source: Pew Research Center (2019c)

FIGURE 15.2
International Differences in Weekly Attendance at Religious Services,

religion, we can't assume they have given up on finding a higher meaning and purpose in their lives. Many people are inclined to see themselves as spiritual but not religious (SBNR). In interviews with young adults who fit the category SBNR, one researcher obtained the following response from a 24-year-old male, who was asked to explain why he continued praying even though he identified as an atheist:

> People might think I'm hypocritical when I say I pray, but I don't think there's anything magical about that word. You don't have to pray to a god or a saint. You just pray. It's just you thinking or not thinking—clearing your head—so you're able to try to be a better person or help someone else out. I mean, I could say "meditation," I guess, but "prayer" is what feels more the right thing for me. … Just because I'm not Catholic now, because I'm an Atheist, doesn't mean I have to give up that word for what I'm doing. I mean, the Pope doesn't have a copyright on it. (Drescher, 2016: 158)

About 73 percent of Canadians describe themselves as spiritual and/or religious, clouding any argument that suggests secularization is on the rise (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey, 2019: 188).

In sum, secularization theory works best when it describes the decline of religion in broad strokes. For the most part, at the level of institutions, religion no longer exercises the same authority over the population it did 200 or even 50 years ago. Similarly, to the extent that people distinguish between religiosity and spirituality, we may mistakenly assume that abandoning formal religion also means discarding a spiritual narrative. As such, the secularization thesis loses its force when it predicts that religiosity will continue to follow a downward trajectory or posits that all countries are changing in the same way. Instead, the revised secularization thesis, with its recognition of nuance and variability, has come to provide a much more accurate framework.

That is not to say that the revised secularization thesis is the only theory favoured by sociologists of religion. In the next section, we describe an alternative, market theory of religion, and then assess how well it explains patterns of religious behaviour over time and place.

The Market Theory

To understand why secularization has not taken its predicted course, sociologists have proposed viewing religion as a market. In this view, religious organizations are suppliers of services such as counselling, pastoral care, youth activities, men's and women's social groups, performance groups, lectures, and discussions. These services are demanded by people who desire religious activities. To meet this demand, religious organizations compete with one another, each offering their own brand or "flavour" of religious experience (Finke and Stark, 2005; Iannaccone, Finke and Stark, 1997). Success in attracting adherents depends on factors such as the organizational structure of the religious body and the quality of its sales representatives, its product, and its marketing techniques.

Importantly, not all societies encourage or permit competition among religions. Where monopolies and other forms of market regulation exist, the market theory predicts growing secularization. Conversely, an open market allowing competition among religions should give rise to greater religiosity.

Let's first see why religious monopolies squelch religious tendencies. A religious monopoly exists when one religious body has acquired special privileges from the state, preventing other religious bodies from selling their brand to consumers. When consumers can access only one brand, satisfaction is limited to those whose needs match what is offered. Everyone else will be dissatisfied. Lacking options, some consumers might resort to underground movements, but most will become indifferent to religion altogether. Apathy also grows among the clergy, who are paid by the state and thus enjoy a secure income regardless of their ability to attract people to their organization.

Sweden is one example of a religious monopoly that exhibits high levels of secularization. Three out of four citizens belong to the Church of Sweden, the country's official religion. Thus, the monopoly is not absolute. Nonetheless, the church remains heavily subsidized by the state, creating little incentive within the church to attract consumers to its product. Not surprisingly, as we observed earlier, Sweden has one of the lowest rates of church attendance in the world.

In contrast, countries such as Canada and the United States permit open competition among religions. Here, the market rewards religious bodies that successfully meet the needs of consumers and punishes with extinction religious bodies that do not attract consumer interest. In such an environment, new products are constantly generated in the quest to conquer different segments of the market. Overall, religiosity flourishes. The end result is **religious pluralism**, a diverse array of religions and religious beliefs in a given area. To retain market share, religious groups must be willing to adapt to the changing needs of consumers.

Religious pluralism refers to the diverse array of religions and religious beliefs in a given area.

A glance back at Figure 15.2 reveals an important weakness of the market theory of religion: It cannot explain variation among rich, Western societies. Canada and the United States, for example, have equally unregulated religious markets but weekly attendance at worship services is much higher in the United States than it is in Canada (36 percent versus 20 percent). Some researchers have suggested that more Americans than Canadians may need the comfort and tangible benefits that religious organizations provide because levels of inequality and poverty are higher in the United States (Norris and Inglehart, 2011). Whether or not this is the case, we must conclude that the market theory of religion is an incomplete explanation.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

Depending on how routinized a religious organization is, it occupies a different place in what sociologists call the "church–sect typology" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1979; Troeltsch, 1931 [1923]). As noted earlier, a *church* is a bureaucratic religious organization that has accommodated itself to conventional society and culture, thereby enduring for hundreds or even thousands of years. Formally trained leaders, hierarchical roles, and clearly outlined rules and regulations provide evidence of the bureaucratic nature of a church. Evidence that a church is integrated into mainstream society includes its generally abstract teachings that do

not challenge worldly authority. As in the case of Russia and Sweden, many citizens may equate church membership with citizenship.

At the other end of the church–sect typology are **sects**. Whereas churches are in a low state of tension with their environment, sects are in a high state of tension. Sects usually form by breaking away from churches over disagreement about church doctrine. When a church evolves into a bureaucratic and worldly institution, sectarians launch a new movement advocating a return to the church's founding principles. Consequently, sects are less integrated into society and less bureaucratized than are churches.

Sects usually form by breaking away from churches because of disagreement about church doctrine. Sects are less integrated into society and less bureaucratized than churches are.

In contrast, **new religious movements** (NRMs) form without breaking off from an established religious organization, although there are some exceptions. By developing its own religious vision, an NRM sets itself in opposition to mainstream culture and society, so it too is in a high state of tension with the environment. Leaders of NRMs tend to be charismatic.

New religious movements (NRMs) are groups headed by charismatic leaders with a unique religious vision that rejects mainstream culture and society.

Sects and NRMs experience one of three outcomes. First, they may disappear, having failed to generate enough buzz to stimulate and maintain interest in them. This fate is the most common.

A second potential outcome is that the group persists but in the process becomes more church-like. A sect or NRM may evolve into a **denomination**. A denomination lies midway on the continuum between church and sect. Unlike sects or NRMs, a denomination does not seek to distance itself from the world and is bureaucratically organized. Hence, it is routinized. Denominations tend to be fairly tolerant toward other denominations. Denominations can also come into being when churches lose their religious monopoly. United Church, Baptist, Lutheran, Missionary Alliance, Pentecostal Assembly, and Presbyterian are some of the many Protestant denominations that exist in Canada today.

Midway on the continuum between church and sect, a denomination does not seek to distance itself from the world, is bureaucratically organized, and generally maintains a tolerant relationship with other denominations.

The third potential outcome for a sect or NRM is that it may become institutionalized. It does so by deliberately resisting assimilation into society. In some instances, sect members separate themselves geographically, as the Hutterites do in their 200 or so colonies, mostly in the Western provinces. However, even in urban settings, sect members can be separated from the larger society because of their strictly enforced rules concerning dress, diet, prayer, and intimate contact with outsiders. Hasidic Jews in Toronto and Montréal illustrate the viability of this isolation strategy.

Are you confused by the ambiguity in the descriptions of these different types of religious groups? Sociologists are well aware that these labels can be problematic—not all religious groups fit easily into a given category. An example of a religious group that defies easy classification is the Church of Scientology. Its founder, Ron Hubbard, created the Church of Scientology in the United States in 1953. The core belief of Scientologists is that they are immortal beings who must undergo a lengthy and costly process called auditing, which helps rid them of negative energy (engrams) and reconnect with their true spiritual character (the thetan). Under Hubbard's leadership the church grew rapidly, claiming millions of members worldwide. Today, even though Scientology retains older celebrities such as Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Kirstie Alley, its ability to recruit new members (and younger celebrities) has faltered. Its membership is in steep decline.

Having been in existence for more than half a century, there are now questions as to whether Scientology will ever make the transition to a denomination. On one hand, it has become highly bureaucratized, suggesting that it has acquired some of the characteristics of a denomination. On the other hand, Scientology remains on the fringes of society. Governments in many countries have refused to grant Scientology status as a religion. Even where it is allowed to operate, many governments say the organization is really a business because it charges its members for services rendered.

At any one time, some religious groups are on the rise while others are in decline. In Canada, declining membership has been occurring in mainstream Protestant denominations such as Presbyterianism, Pentecostalism, and the United Church. In contrast, conservative, evangelical, or fundamentalist Protestant denominations are gaining popularity (Haskell, Burgoyne, and Flatt, 2016). At the other end of the religious spectrum, the New Atheist movement caters to the interests of the non-religious (LeDrew, 2016; Simmons, 2017).

The Future of Religion

During the twenty-first century, gradual secularization will likely continue. At the same time, the expanded menu that is available to Canadians today will likely foster even greater religious pluralism in the future. What will be the net result of the contradictory social processes of secularization and religious pluralism as they unfold alongside one another? At least one sociologist suggests we are heading toward religious polarization (Bibby, 2011). Polarization occurs when fewer Canadians appear in the ambiguous middle, choosing instead to either embrace or reject religion. It is possible that polarization may one day test the limits of religious tolerance in this country.

However, as you might now appreciate, when it comes to predicting the future of religion, even the most careful forecasts have a way of being confounded by events. Therefore, in the next section, we turn our attention to better understanding the current divides in religion across the world and considering places where religious tolerance can be in short supply.

Time for Review

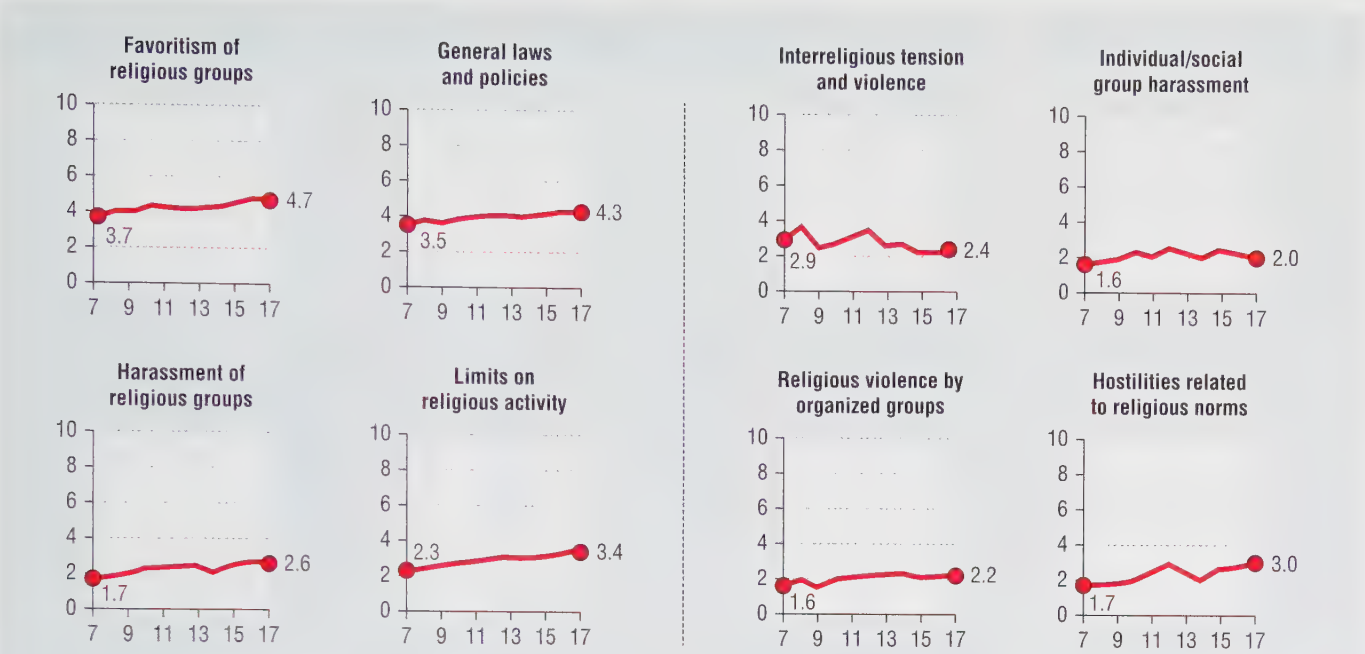
- What is the secularization thesis? Why did sociologists revise the secularization thesis in the 1990s?
- In what ways do churches, sects, NRMs, and denominations differ from one another?
- What are the three possible outcomes for sects and NRMs?
- According to the market theory, under what conditions is religious pluralism most likely to flourish? Why is the market theory of religion incomplete?

Religion Around the World

Religious Tolerance

For many people, religious affiliation corresponds with the dominant religion of their country. Almost all Hindus, for example, live in the three Hindu-majority countries (India, Mauritius, and Nepal). Similarly, the majority of Christians, Muslims, and the religiously unaffiliated are found in countries where their respective religious affiliation is dominant. Apart from these four categories (which together make up 86 percent of the world's population), those who belong to other religions are almost always in the minority. For example, most Jews live outside of Israel, the only country where Judaism is dominant. There are no countries where faiths such as Baha'i, Sikhism, Jainism, Shintoism, or Indigenous traditions are in the majority.

Religious minorities can sometimes be at risk from those who belong to the dominant religion. In atheist China, more than a million Uighurs, a Muslim ethnic minority group, have been resettled in detention centres to be "re-educated." A recent turn towards Hindu nationalism in India poses risk for its two largest minority religions, Islam and Christianity. A new law, passed in 2019, has the potential to treat millions of Muslims as illegal immigrants, depriving them of citizenship and paving the way for their deportation. In Myanmar, a Buddhist-majority country, thousands of Rohingya Muslims were brutally massacred in 2017. Those who escaped were forced to flee the country. Today, nearly a million Rohingya remain displaced in refugee camps in neighbouring Bangladesh. The Islamist group Boko Haram has killed or kidnapped thousands of Christians in Nigeria. The situation for girls is particularly dire—they are forced to convert to Islam and then married to their captors. In Turkey and Egypt, where Islam is the dominant religion, governments have enacted laws that undermine the status of Christians, emboldening people to commit church bombings and other acts of violence. Violence on the part of Sunni Muslim extremists



Source: Pew Research Center (2019c)

FIGURE 15.3

Global Means for Eight Different Categories of Government Restrictions and Social Hostilities between 2007 and 2017

has decimated minority religious groups in Iraq, including the Yazidi and Shi'a Muslim Turkmen, murdering its men and forcing women and girls into sexual slavery.

Are government restrictions on religion and social hostilities between religious groups on the rise? For 10 years, the Pew Research Center has tracked these patterns annually (see Figure 15.3). It found an increase from 2007 to 2017 in government restrictions on some religious groups (Pew Research Center, 2019c). As for the number of countries with a high level of social hostility involving religion, the pattern is less consistent but suggests modest increases.

Religious Affiliation in Canada

Europeans who first settled Canada were overwhelmingly Christian. They were divided between English-speaking Protestant and French-speaking Roman Catholic. Friction between the two religious groups was embedded in the larger struggle between Britain and France for political dominance. In general, when control of territory changes hands due to conflict, the dominant religion also changes (Jamie S. Scott, 2012). Yet when British forces prevailed, the treaties that established the boundaries of Canada also guaranteed religious freedom for Catholics. Consequently, both religions thrived.

Jews first settled in Canada in the eighteenth century. As a religious minority, they were initially afforded few rights. For example, the state restricted the registration of births, deaths, and marriages to the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. It took until 1831 for Jews to be granted full religious freedom and political emancipation (Canada was the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to do so), but some legal and institutional restrictions on Jews remained until the mid-twentieth century.

Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists did not start arriving in Canada in significant numbers until the twentieth century, in part because of racist ideologies that prohibited certain ethnic and racial minorities from immigrating to this country. For this reason, prior to the 1970s, immigrants came mainly from European countries, most of them identifying themselves as Christian.

Today, most immigrants come from Asia and the Middle East, enriching Canada with their diverse cultural and religious traditions. Consequently, the proportions of Canadians

TABLE 15.2

Religious Affiliation, Canada, 2001 and 2011 (percentage)

Source: Statistics Canada, Religions in Canada: 2001 Census Analysis Series; and 2013, Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada, National Household Survey, 2011. Catalogue No. 99-010-X2011001. Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

Religion	2001 (%)	2011 (%)
Roman Catholic	43.2	38.7
Protestant	29.2	28.6
No religious identification	16.2	23.9
Muslim	2.0	3.2
Hindu	1.0	1.5
Sikh	0.9	1.4
Buddhist	1.0	1.1
Jewish	1.1	1.0
Traditional Indigenous	0.1	0.2
Other	5.3	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0

who identify as Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh have increased (see Table 15.2). Non-religious immigrants, mainly from Asia, also contribute to the growing proportion of the non-religious. The proportion of Canadians identifying as Christians dropped from 72.4 percent to 67.3 percent between 2001 and 2011, while the proportion without religious identification increased from around one-sixth to nearly one-quarter. The next Canadian census in 2021 will likely reveal a continuation of these trends.

Religiosity

We conclude our discussion of religion by considering social factors that determine how important religion is to people—that is, their religiosity. We can measure religiosity in various ways. However, it is important to remember that some measures might also capture elements of spirituality. Because of the distinction between religiosity and spirituality, we should not be surprised to obtain different estimates when operationalizing what are traditionally known as the three Bs of religiosity: belonging, beliefs, and behaviour.

Religious affiliation is a measure of belonging; that is, whether a respondent identifies with any particular religion. As noted earlier, religious affiliation among Canadians has been declining over time. Beliefs can be assessed by asking people whether they believe God exists or by asking them how familiar they are with the main tenets of their faith. We have already seen that most Canadians say that God is real. Finally, behaviours reflect how often a person engages in religious activities, which may include the frequency of attendance at religious services, of seeking comfort from a religious authority, or of praying or meditating.

Religious behaviour depends on social factors. Figure 15.4 focuses on weekly church attendance by age group and distinguishes between people who immigrated to Canada and the Canadian-born. For those born in Canada, the most heavily involved in religious activities are seniors. How can we explain this? First, elderly people have more time and need for religion. Because they are not usually in school, employed in the paid labour force, or busy raising a family, they have more opportunity than younger people do to attend church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. Moreover, because seniors are generally closer to illness and death than are younger people, they are more likely to require the solace of religion. To a degree, then, involvement in religious activities is a life-cycle issue.

At the same time, we can see that, for immigrants to Canada, church attendance does not conform to the age-related pattern observed for those born in Canada. Instead, it is the youngest immigrants who are the most likely to attend religious services regularly. Many recent immigrants come from societies that are more religious than the societies from which earlier immigrants came. We conclude that Canadian immigrants are helping to breathe new life into religion across the country.

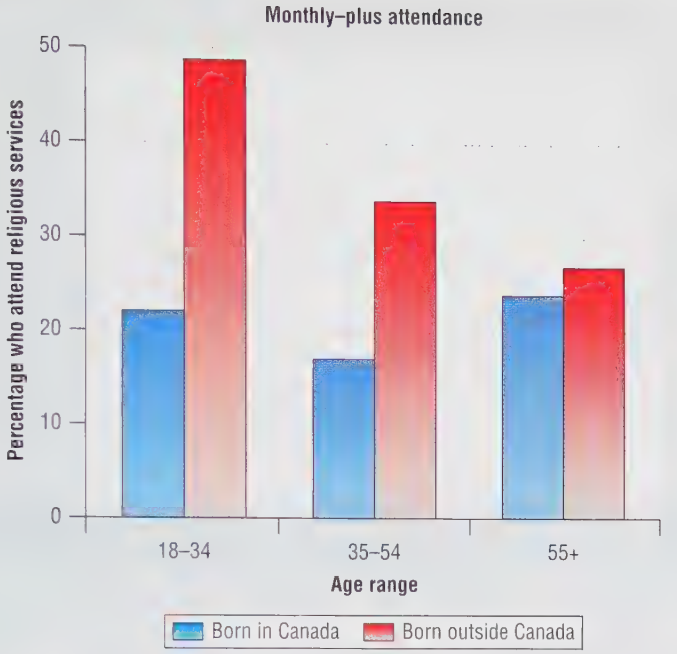


FIGURE 15.4

Religious Service Attendance of Canadian Immigrants and Non-immigrants by Age Cohort. Immigrants to Canada do not exhibit the same age-related patterns in church attendance as the Canadian-born.

Source: Statistics Canada. 2011d. National Household Survey: Data tables. Tabulation: Religion (108), Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration (11), Age Groups (10) and Sex (3) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2011 National Household Survey.

Others have offered another explanation for higher church attendance among seniors (Bengtson et al., 2015). Different age groups live through different times, and today's older people reached maturity when religion was a more authoritative force in society. A person's current religious involvement depends partly on whether he or she grew up in more religious times. Thus, although people are likely to become more religiously involved as they age, they are unlikely ever to become as involved as seniors are today.

Mama Belle and the kids/Shutterstock

Religiosity is partly a learned behaviour. Whether parents give a child a religious upbringing is likely to have a lasting impact on the child.

It is also the case that people whose parents attended religious services frequently are more likely to do so themselves (Bengtson with Putney and Harris, 2013). That is because religiosity is partly a *learned* behaviour. Whether parents give a child a religious upbringing is likely to have a lasting impact on the child. Moreover, even if they abandon their religion for a short time as they become adults, a sizeable number eventually return to their religious roots. Their reawakening often coincides with marriage and parenthood, signalling perhaps a desire to expose their own children to religious instruction (Uecker, Mayrl, and Stroope, 2016).

We have not supplied an exhaustive list of the factors that influence religiosity. However, even our brief overview suggests that religiosity is influenced in part by opportunity, need, and learning. Consequently, the people who are most involved in religion and who attend religious services most frequently are those who need organized religion most because of their advanced age, those who immigrated from relatively religious societies, those who have the most time to go to services, and those who were taught to be religious as children.

Time for Review

- In what ways have immigration patterns contributed to religious diversity in Canada?
- Why are Canadian seniors in, say 25 years, likely to exhibit lower levels of religiosity than seniors do today?

Summary

1. **How does religion operate as a force for both social cohesion and social conflict?**
   Durkheim argued that the main function of religion is to increase social cohesion by providing ritualized opportunities for people to experience the collective conscience. In contrast, Marx held that religion reinforces social inequality. Feminists note the patriarchal nature of all major world religions, many of which continue to promote the idea that men should hold authority over women in all matters.

2. **Why was it necessary to revise the secularization thesis?**
   The secularization thesis holds that religious institutions, actions, and consciousness are on the decline worldwide. The revised secularization thesis instead attempts to explain variation across different contexts while maintaining that secularization is an overarching influence.

3. **How does the market theory of religion address variation in patterns of secularization?**
   The market theory of religion characterizes religious organizations as suppliers of services to people who desire religious activities. In areas where religion has established a monopoly, too few consumers will have their religious needs met, generating mass indifference and high levels of secularization. When religious organizations are free to compete with one another, consumers can choose from a diverse and changing religious menu. Competition creates greater overall interest in religion. Although the theory has merit in some respects, it does not account well for variation across countries in the rate of attending religious services.

4. Are religious freedom and tolerance under threat?

The majority of the world's Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and the non-religious live in countries where their respective religion is dominant. Religious minorities may face limits on religious freedom and threats to personal safety. Government restrictions on religious minorities and social hostilities between religious groups have increased in recent years.

5. What social factors predict religiosity?

An individual's religiosity is determined by such factors as the individual's age and socialization (whether he or she was brought up in a religious family or immigrated from a relatively religious society).

16 Education

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Compare the two main effects of schooling: homogenizing students into a common cultural system and sorting them into different social classes.
- Contrast the functionalist argument that education establishes a socioeconomic hierarchy based on merit with the conflict theory that education ensures the persistence of privilege.
- List the main factors responsible for the rise of mass schooling.
- Distinguish the manifest functions of education, such as increasing literacy and numeracy, from the latent functions of education, such as increasing national solidarity.
- Analyze how economic barriers limit education.
- Explain how social interaction in schools reproduces inequalities.
- Identify the advances that women have made toward educational equality and the challenges that Indigenous people face in making similar progress.

Reopening Schools during a Pandemic

In Canada, the decision to close schools during the COVID-19 epidemic was swift and straightforward. No one wanted students to catch the new disease or spread it to others. In contrast, discussions about when and how to reopen schools were filled with mixed emotions. Without a vaccine or treatment, many people worried that schools would become sites of infection once students returned. As time passed, however, the social necessity of school began to override these fears. People began to think that the costs were piling up the longer schools remained shut.

Undoubtedly, keeping schools closed had the potential to exact a high personal toll on students. For most students, physical presence in school is a hugely important aspect of learning. Social isolation and the loss of daily routine erode psychological well-being. Moreover, school is a refuge for many disadvantaged students who would otherwise go without food, attention, or support. Finally, there were concerns that school closures would curb students' future prospects. For example, one survey found the greatest concern of post-secondary students was that school closures would affect their ability to graduate and find a job in their chosen field (Statistics Canada, 2020h).

But the costs were also social. School closures pose a threat to the social order. On a practical level, the economy could not fully restart as long as parents had to remain at home looking after children. More broadly, the educational system is essential to the well-being of society. No society can secure its future without a process that educates and socializes the next generation.

Schools, therefore, are hugely important institutions. They create homogeneity out of diversity by instructing all students in a uniform curriculum. However, they also sort students into paths that terminate in different social classes. Sorting favours students who develop the greatest facility in the common culture while confining those of lesser skills to subordinate work roles and lower ranks in the class structure.

GagliardiPhotography/Shutterstock

In the classroom, homogeneity is achieved by enforcing standards that serve as a cultural common denominator.

Time for Review

- What are the two main functions of schools?
- Identify specific events or processes in your own schooling that led you to develop a common outlook with your schoolmates and that segregated you and your schoolmates into different streams.

Mass Education: An Overview

The education system has displaced organized religion as the main purveyor of formal knowledge, and it is second in importance only to the family as an agent of socialization. By the time you finished high school, you had spent nearly 13 000 hours in a classroom.

Three hundred years ago, only a small minority of people learned to read and write. Just over a century ago, most people in the world never attended school. As late as 1950, only about 10 percent of the world's countries boasted systems of compulsory mass education (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal, 1992). Even today, many countries in Africa have literacy rates below 50 percent, while in India and Egypt a quarter of the population is illiterate.

In contrast, Canada has nearly 16 000 elementary and secondary schools employing more than 400 000 educators who teach just over 5 million children (Statistics Canada, 2018e). Another 2 million Canadians attend postsecondary institutions. (Elementary schools are primary schools, high schools are secondary schools, and colleges and universities are postsecondary institutions.)

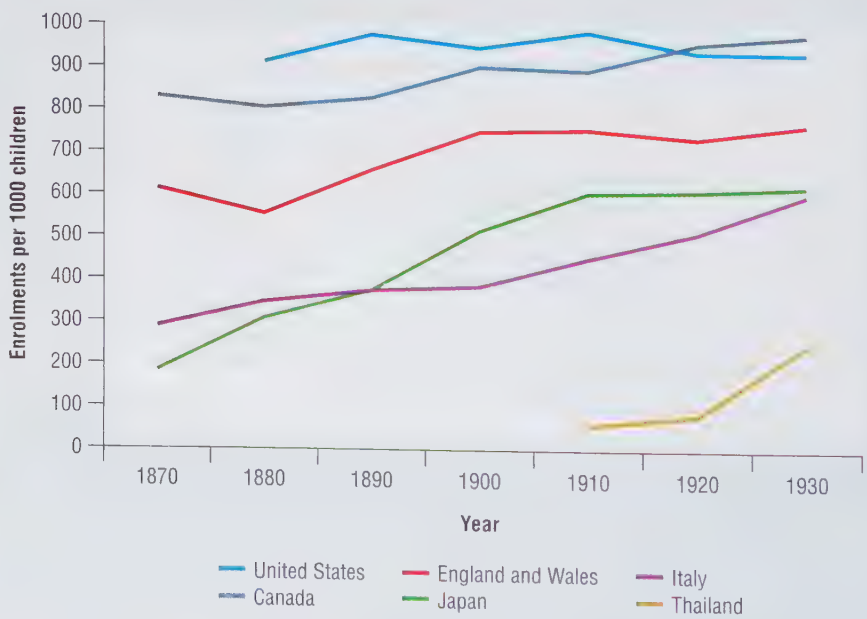
School attendance is high, with 97 percent of 15-year-olds in high school. Nine of every ten Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 has graduated from high school and 54 percent have a postsecondary degree or diploma (Statistics Canada, 2018e). This level of **educational attainment** is well above the average for OECD countries; Canada has the world's highest percentage of people with postsecondary degrees). Clearly, education is part of the Canadian way of life.

Educational attainment is the number of years of schooling successfully completed or, for higher learning, the degrees or certificates earned.

Universal mass education is a recent phenomenon and is limited to relatively wealthy countries (see Figure 16.1). Around 1900, Canada and the United States were the first countries to approach universal educational participation by young people. Societies that today are highly advanced in terms of economy and technology, such as Japan, Italy, and the UK, lagged far behind.

FIGURE 16.1

Elementary School Enrolments per 1000 Children Ages 5–14 for Various Countries, 1870–1930



Source: Peter H. Lindert, Growing Public: Social Spending and Economic Growth since the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge, England; New York: 2004), pp. 91–93.

For most of history, families were chiefly responsible for socializing the young and training them to perform adult roles. In preindustrial Europe, the vast majority of children learned to work as adults by observing and helping their elders in the largely agricultural economy. Only a small urban minority had much use for such skills as reading and arithmetic. The literate and numerate few were typically trained in religious institutions. In fact, before the rise of Protestantism, priests held a virtual monopoly on literacy. The Catholic Church's authority depended on the *inability* of ordinary people to read the Bible. It even went so far as to persecute people who made the Bible available in local languages. William Tyndale, whose English translation became the standard King James Bible, was burned at the stake for his efforts in 1536.

Uniform Socialization

Creating systems of education with sufficient resources to include all children was a social change of breathtaking scope. Training in families had been decentralized, unorganized, and uneven in quality. Religious training was never widely available and tended to set people apart from the surrounding community. Replacing these forms of instruction with a centralized and rationalized system created strong pressures toward uniformity and standardization. Diversity among families, regions, and religious traditions gradually gave way to homogenized indoctrination into a common culture.

Canada was in some ways exceptional because, in the nineteenth century, the provinces recognized separate school systems for Catholics and Protestants; doing so was necessary to convince Québec to join Confederation. However, the postsecondary institutions' lack of recognition of distinct religious tracks pressured secondary schools to cover the same topics in the same fashion in their efforts to prepare students for more advanced training. Students today can travel thousands of kilometres for higher education and experience no more discontinuity than do those who switch neighbourhoods.

Surrendering children to state control was not universally popular, especially at first. Some students preferred skipping class to sitting in school, and special police (truant officers) were charged with tracking down absentees, who were then punished. Effective mass education was achieved only through laws that made attendance compulsory. All Canadian provinces and territories now require parents to ensure their children are educated up to a certain age. Although variation exists, in most provinces, about 95 percent of children are enrolled in public schools, about 4 percent are in independent schools, and fewer than 1 percent are home-schooled (Van Pelt et al., 2015).

Making education available to everyone, whether they liked it or not, was only a starting point. The amount of education that people receive has risen steadily, and this trend shows no sign of abating. In 1951, fewer than 1 in 50 Canadians had completed a university degree. Then, completing university allowed a person entry into a small elite. Today, two of every three Canadian adults has some postsecondary education.

Individual Advantages and Disadvantages

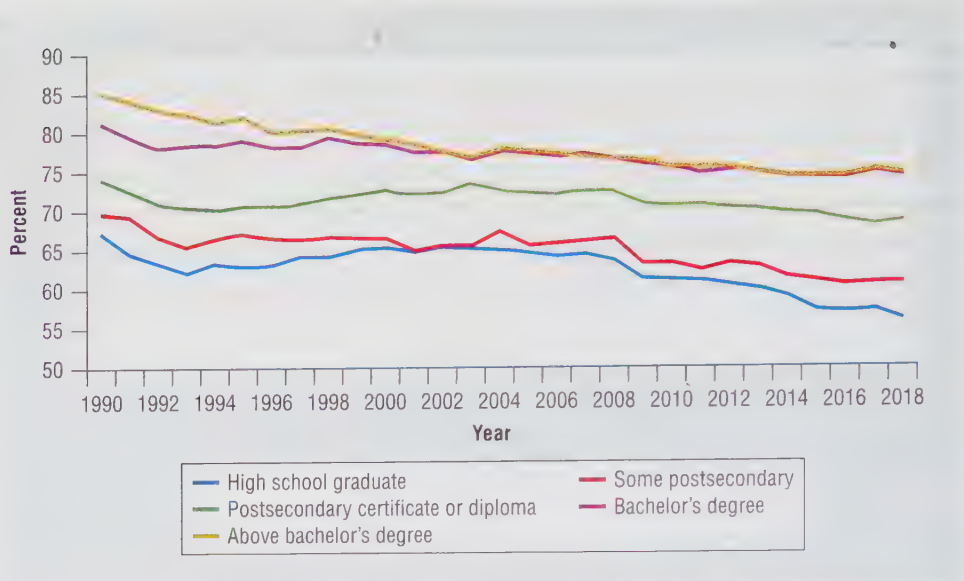
Higher educational attainment helps people get jobs and earn more. Figure 16.2 illustrates this relationship in Canada. University graduates enjoy an employment rate that is consistently higher than those with no diploma or degree past high school.

Education also increases earnings. As Figure 16.3 shows, the odds of earning high pay steadily improve for both men and women as educational attainment increases. The relationship of education to income is imperfect. People at every level of education are found at each level of earnings. However, the pattern is clear: More education and better earnings tend to go together.

In the next section, we examine how mass education arose. We then examine theories that connect the rise of mass education to industrialization, arguing that education

FIGURE 16.2

Employment Rate by Education in Canada, 1990–2018



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada (2019k)

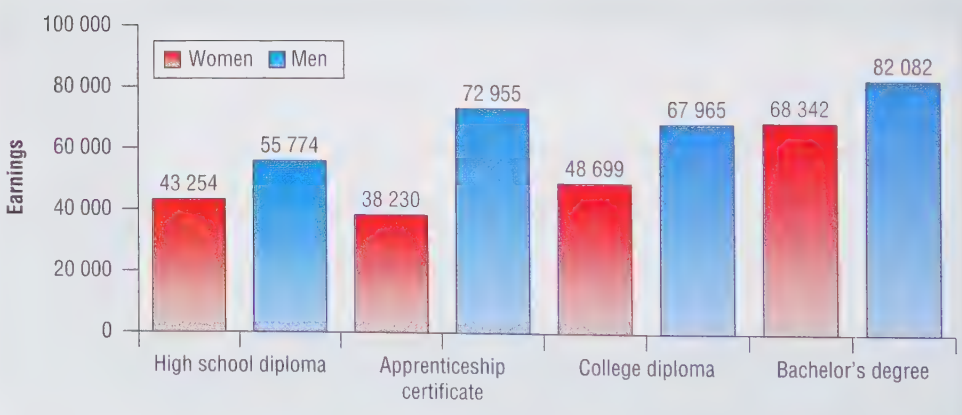
provides a basis for collective and individual wealth and motivates widespread loyalty to culture and society. We will see how education reproduces class inequality. We conclude by reviewing a series of recent developments and future challenges for Canada's system of mass schooling.

The Rise of Mass Schooling

What accounts for the spread of mass schooling? Sociologists usually highlight four factors: the development of the printing press that led to inexpensive book production, the Protestant Reformation, the spread of democracy, and industrialism. Let us consider each of these factors in turn.

FIGURE 16.3

Median Annual Earnings of Women and Men Ages 25 to 64 Who Worked Full Time and Full Year as Paid Employees, by Highest Level of Education and Province or Territory, 2015



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, Does education pay? A comparison of earnings by level of education in Canada and its provinces and territories, Census of Population, 2016. (2017) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

First, the printing press: In 1436, Johannes Gutenberg introduced the printing press with movable type in Europe. The effect was revolutionary. Books were expensive when scribes were the only source of new copies. The printing press led to a dramatic fall in book prices and an explosion of supply. Many of the new printed books were in the vernacular—languages used every day by common folk—and not in the Latin that only scholars understood. Literacy spread beyond elite circles, first in cities and eventually into rural areas, as inexpensive books fostered demand for schools to teach children the useful art of reading (Eisenstein, 1983).

Second, Protestantism: The Catholic Church relied on priests to convey dogma to believers. The education of priests was a primary motivation for the foundation of European universities in the Middle Ages. However, in the early sixteenth century, Martin Luther, a German monk, began to criticize the Catholic Church. Protestantism grew out of his criticisms. The Protestants believed that the Bible alone, and not Church doctrine, should guide Christians. They expected Christians to have more direct contact with the word of God than was allowed by the Catholic Church. Accordingly, Protestants needed to be able to read the scriptures for themselves. The rise of Protestantism was thus a spur to popular literacy.

Third, democracy: The rise of political democracy led to free education for all children. Where local populations acquired the democratic means to tax themselves, tax-supported schools arose. France, which gave all men voting rights in 1848, expanded education earlier than did England, where the right to vote was not widespread until a few decades later. North America followed a similar pattern (Lindert, 2004). The earliest school systems were established in Upper Canada and the northern United States about 1870. By 1900, Canada and the United States were the first countries in the world in which enrolment rates for all children ages 5 to 14 exceeded 90 percent. Another first: At least in elementary education, girls were enrolled at almost the same rate as boys were.

Mass Schooling and National Wealth

The fourth and most important reason for the rise of mass schooling was industrialization: Mass education was widely recognized as an absolute necessity for creating an industrial economy.

The Industrial Revolution began in England in the final decades of the eighteenth century. Germany and the United States soon sought to catch up to England, and by the turn of the twentieth century, they had surpassed it. Observers noted that both Germany and the United States had school systems that offered places to nearly all young people. Literacy and numeracy were widespread, although what counted as literacy in those days would not impress us today.

Historians assess the literacy of that period by counting the rate at which people signed marriage registers or similar documents with a name and not merely an X or another mark. However, as the number of people achieving such minimal performance rose, so did the number of people with much higher levels of literacy. Eventually, it was evident that a highly productive economy requires an education system large enough to create a mass labour force and rich enough to train and employ researchers able to work at the cutting edge of modern science.

Today, investment in education is acknowledged as an important step in achieving great national wealth (see Box 16.1). However, the connection between education and wealth is by no means automatic. Some countries educate a relatively small proportion or a relatively large proportion of their population given their level of wealth (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014).

Education is not only a *source* of wealth; it is also a *product* of wealth. After all, education is expensive. Raising education levels for entire populations requires overcoming a vicious cycle: A significant fraction of a country's population must invest a

BOX 16.1 Social Policy

IS ONLINE LEARNING A GOOD IDEA?

Because education is expensive, governments, universities, and public-school boards are always looking for ways to cut costs. Online courses and virtual technologies have grown in popularity in Canada and elsewhere. They maximize revenue by accommodating more students than can be fit into a classroom, and they minimize the cost of overhead (building construction and maintenance) and labour (instructors' salaries).

A recent report summarizes the state of online education in Canadian universities (Donovan et al., 2019). Here are three major findings:

1. Few postsecondary institutions offer entire programs online but most do offer a large and growing number of online courses. Online courses are more likely to be found in larger universities. Pre-COVID, nearly one in five postsecondary students had taken at least one online course for credit.
2. Learning management systems (LMSs) form the backbone of online course technology. Examples include Blackboard, Canvas, and Quercus. LMSs offer students and professors the opportunity to share information through recorded or live lectures, live tutorials and office hours, readings, handouts, Web links, and videos. In addition, nearly all institutions rely on various web-based video technologies such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams to augment LMSs. Few institutions take advantage of augmented or virtual reality.
3. Blended learning combines traditional classroom interaction with online teaching. The trend toward blended learning is upward, but most institutions do not exceed 10 percent of their course offerings in this format.

This report predates the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of postsecondary institutions that deliver only online courses spiked after the outbreak, raising questions about whether the transition to online learning may become permanent. Research suggests online learning has advantages, including convenience and flexibility. Major challenges also exist. They include the loss of face-to-face engagement, technological glitches, insufficient technical support, and unequal access (some students lack access to fast Internet connections and hardware with the minimum specifications needed to accommodate online learning).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Learning styles may be visual (learning by means of pictures, images, and spatial understanding), aural (learning by means of sound, including music), verbal (learning by means of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to speech), physical (learning by using the body and sense of touch), logical (learning by using reasoning), social (learning by means of interaction with other people), and solitary (learning while working and studying alone). What kind of learning style is best suited to online learning?
2. Every policy has costs and benefits. Considering that university administration, professors, and students have different interests, who benefits most from a shift toward online learning? Who is most disadvantaged?

great deal of time and money to become educated before a sufficient number of teachers have been trained to instruct nearly everyone. This time and money must be saved from the time and income that are needed to supply necessities like food and shelter. What is true for individuals is also true for societies: Education enhances the ability to generate earnings and wealth, but educational accumulation is greatly facilitated by an earlier accumulation of wealth.

Time for Review

- What is the connection between education and income?
- What factors contributed to the rise of mass schooling?
- What connections exist between education and national wealth?

The Functions of Education

Latent Functions

Schools do not merely carry out training. They also concentrate young people for extended periods in common locations. In children's early years, the law requires attendance. In more advanced programs, economic incentives and family pressures encourage student attendance. Certain latent or unintended consequences arise from segregating people by age and forcing them to spend much of their time together.

One result is that schools encourage the development of a separate youth culture that can conflict with parents' values (Coleman, 1961). When students are asked to rank the popularity of schoolmates, rankings don't centre on academic achievement. Instead, they signify athletic and social success. Students who are low on such peer rankings may find the youth culture of school alienating. Alienation can lead to other problems, but the educational system is rarely organized in ways that deal effectively with them (see Box 16.2).

At higher levels, educational institutions also serve as a "marriage market" that brings potential mates together. Students in educational institutions often share a common social class and related background characteristics. Moreover, since most students postpone mate selection until they complete their education, potential mates often share similar educational qualifications. In these ways, educational settings encourage the choice of partners who share social origins and destinations (Hendi, 2019). The result is **assortative mating**—choosing a mate who is similar to ourselves on various ranking criteria.

Assortative mating occurs when marriage partners are selected so that spouses are similar on various criteria of social rank.

Schools also perform other unintended functions. For example, schools keep children under close surveillance for much of the day, freeing their parents to work. University and college attendance postpones full-time labour force participation, which helps restrict job competition and support wage levels (Bowles and Gintis, 2011). Through their encouragement of critical, independent thinking, educational institutions can also become "schools of dissent" that challenge authoritarian regimes and promote social change (Brower, 1975; Freire, 1972).

Manifest Functions: The Logic of Industrialism

The characteristics of institutions in preindustrial societies vary widely. Functionalists argue that industrialism causes convergence among societies, dictating that social institutions develop according to a common pattern. Said differently, social institutions must perform certain common, manifest (or intended) functions to make industrialism possible. In particular, industrialism involves the widespread application of science and technology in the economy, making work more specialized and technical, and changing working conditions. The education system mirrors these trends (Brown, Reay, and Vincent, 2013).

Some students find the youth culture of school alienating.

Daisy Daisy/Shutterstock

Cultural Homogeneity and Solidarity

Durkheim saw people as continuously torn between egoistic needs and moral impulses, with schools enhancing the moral side by working to create cultural uniformity and social

BOX 16.2 Sociology and the Media

THIRTEEN REASONS WHY

The popular Netflix show *Thirteen Reasons Why* has been lauded for its efforts to shine a light on youth mental health problems. It has also been criticized for its treatment of youth suicide. The show explores why Hannah Baker, a seemingly popular 17-year-old girl at Liberty High School, kills herself. Clues are found in a set of cassettes she mails to a classmate before taking her own life. As the plot unfolds, the audience sees how bullying, betrayal, and rape underlie Hannah's despair.

The suicide scene ignited fierce public debate and an enormous outcry from mental health professionals. Because suicide can be contagious when sensationalized or glorified, professionals worried that some youth would identify with Hannah and imitate her behaviour. Evidence appears to confirm that the show influenced youth suicide. One study reported that Internet searches for suicide spiked in the three weeks following the show's release (Ayers et al. 2017). Another study found that in the eight months immediately following the show's release, the suicide rate among US youth ages 0 to 17 increased by nearly 30 percent while remaining unchanged in older age groups (Bridge et al., 2019). The backlash eventually forced Netflix to edit out the suicide scene, even as the network stood by its claim that its intent was to encourage empathy toward youth with mental health problems (Marshall, 2019).

Concern for the mental health of young people is well founded. In Canada, 19 percent of males and 29 percent of females between the ages of 11 and 25 report having suicide-related thoughts (Goodday et al., 2019). More than two-thirds of North American postsecondary students have reported experiencing "overwhelming anxiety;" over 10 percent have seriously considered suicide at some point in the 12 months before they were interviewed (American College Health Association, 2019). In parallel, an astonishing increase has been observed in the number of students seeking crisis and counselling services, overwhelming school resources (Glauser, 2017).

For many reasons, colleges and universities are at the centre of this emerging crisis. Many mental disorders manifest themselves when people are between 18 and 24 years old, which coincides with the age of most undergraduate students. Moreover, many postsecondary students are living away from home for the first time. It's an opportunity to gain new experiences and experiment with newfound independence. However, not all choices are good ones. Fast-food diets and long nights in front of a computer screen are regular features of university life. Yet such practices, along with binge drinking and risky sexual behaviour, wear down the body's ability to stave off illness and cope with stress. And there can be no doubt about it: University life is often stressful. The workload is heavy, and there is never enough time to get everything done. Added to this are worries about mounting student debt and what the future holds. And don't forget the pressure to get good marks! Students who can't cope feel anxious and depressed. If left unchecked, these feelings can lead to more serious mental health problems.

What have postsecondary institutions done to address unmet mental health-care needs among students? Some have introduced a reading week in the fall semester. Getting time off in the middle of the semester has been wildly popular with students, who see it as an opportunity to catch their breath and recharge. Other schools have begun to offer sessions where stressed-out students can pet and play with a therapy dog. Still other schools have built wellness centres, increased the number of counsellors, and referred acute cases to external health-care providers. Despite these efforts, long waiting lists and limited options for campus mental health services persist, suggesting that more must be done to alleviate the mental health crisis in Canadian colleges and universities.

David Moir/©Netflix/Courtesy Everett Collection/Canadian Press Images

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What does your college or university offer to help students cope with stress? How successful do you think its efforts might be?
2. Jack.org is a youth-led Canadian organization that equips and empowers young adults to promote positive mental health initiatives in their communities. What makes their approach different from how universities and colleges address youth mental health problems?

solidarity. By instilling a sense of authority, discipline, and morality in children, schools make society cohesive (Durkheim, 1956, 1961 [1925]).

Contemporary sociologists acknowledge Durkheim's argument and broaden it. They point to a variety of manifest functions schools perform that are aimed at creating solidarity through cultural homogeneity. For example, Canadian schools teach students civic responsibility, pride in their nation, and respect for the law. Students also learn to think of democracy as the best form of government and capitalism as the best type of economic system (Boyles, 2018; Callahan, 1962). Finally, schools transmit shared knowledge and culture between generations, thereby fostering a common cultural identity.

Common School Standards

The uniformity of much industrial work requires an education system that teaches workers common standards. Staffing schools to meet this goal was a huge challenge. A large number of student teachers needed to be taught the same outlook and skills. Language was a problem too because, until recently, substantial variations in language and dialect existed within small areas. Creating cultural conformity required designating certain conventions of grammar, spelling, and pronunciation as correct and imposing these conventions on teacher-candidates and certification centres. A demanding and expensive system needed to be created in which a privileged few were recruited to elite institutions, socialized to the new standards, and then sent back to peripheral regions to impose the uniform standards on students. By this means, the language conventions at such university centres as Oxford and the Sorbonne were established as the cultural ideal against which student performances were judged.

National Solidarity

Before the rise of public education, an individual identified with the unique worldview of his or her local community. As public education grew, mass socialization shifted to a common set of cultural beliefs, norms, and values directed by a central state. In this way, public education promoted membership in a national community composed of individuals who were mostly strangers but who felt connected because of a shared culture. They became part of an imagined community known as the nation.

The loyalties of imagined communities were centred on states because only states could afford the enormous expense of mass education. States provided classrooms with flags, rituals, patriotic songs, and historical myths, along with adults who supplied enthusiastic leadership. Legal requirements meant participation was not a matter of choice. Upper Canada led the world in not only providing universal education but requiring it. In 1871, Ontario pioneered compulsory education by fining parents whose children ages 7 to 12 did not attend school for at least four months each year. Since then, all provinces and territories have gradually tightened such requirements; most now require that students stay in school until they turn 16. Tightening requirements had the desired effect of increasing the number of years children spent in school and, subsequently, reducing unemployment rates (Oreopoulos, 2005). Such benefits soften the harsh realities of required participation imposed on those who unwillingly participate in state-sponsored public schooling.

Functionalists are correct in saying that mass education offers many people a ticket to economic, social, and cultural success. They also have a point when they argue that mass education socializes students into a common culture that enhances economic development. Nonetheless, the functionalist view of education is one-sided. While education can produce these positive individual and social outcomes, it does not do so for everyone. Institutionalized education also produces division and disadvantage, as you will now learn.

Time for Review

- What are the latent functions of public education?
- How do the manifest functions of mass education fit the requirements of industrialism?

Sorting into Classes and Hierarchies: A Conflict Perspective

A **meritocracy** is a social hierarchy in which rank corresponds to individual capacities fairly tested against a common standard.

Functionalists argue that modern educational institutions provide all students with equal opportunity to excel. In this view, differences in ability, motivation, and effort allow some students to perform better than others do. Those who learn poorly get inferior jobs, but that's the nature of a **meritocracy**—a social hierarchy in which rank is allocated by tests of individual merit. In a meritocracy, some children are born to lower-ranked families, but if they perform well in school, they can expect upward mobility. Likewise, some children are born to higher-ranked families, but if they perform poorly in school, they can expect downward mobility (Bell, 1973; McNamee and Miller, 2009).

Conflict theorists challenge the functionalist assumption that educational attainment and subsequent social ranking are regulated by performance based on individual merit. They identify other factors that contribute to educational and economic success, and we survey several of them here. We also examine several prominent features of primary and secondary schooling that tend to preserve the stratification system. We begin by first showing how higher education and advanced degrees are forms of privilege that are less accessible to those with lower-class backgrounds.

Economic Barriers to Higher Education

It might be possible to create an education system in which academic performance is the sole criterion for allocating people to the stratification system. However, few academic programs admit only qualified people and supply all who do qualify with funding to meet all expenses. In most cases, higher education in Canada and elsewhere requires students and their families to shoulder significant financial burdens. Tuition fees are high and rising. Moreover, tuition is only part of the cost of a year at school, particularly for those who leave home to pursue their studies.

Social class origin strongly affects how much formal education people attain (Sullivan, Ketende, and Joshi, 2013). Many countries, Canada among them, have greatly expanded postsecondary education in the past 50 or 60 years. Expansion has lessened class effects, but it has not eliminated them.

How exactly does family income affect postsecondary participation rates? The evidence shows a clear social gradient in which postsecondary education increases at every step of the family income ladder. While access to postsecondary education is much less restricted by family income in Canada than it is in the United States, substantial social inequality remains. About a third of students from families in the bottom quarter of the income distribution attend postsecondary institutions, while about half from families in the top quarter attend (Belley, Frenette, and Lochner, 2011; Kamanzi and Doray, 2015).

Exclusion, Credentialism, and Professionalization

Social exclusion is achieved by creating barriers so that certain social opportunities and positions are not open to all.

Because postsecondary education is a valuable asset that children from richer families are more likely to obtain, education becomes a tool for **social exclusion**—setting up boundaries so that certain social opportunities and positions are not open to all (Wright and Rogers, 2015). Exclusion occurs when some groups have more resources than others do, allowing them to obtain educational credentials that allow them to amass still more privileges.

Note that social exclusion takes place even if advanced education does not lead to useful knowledge or genuine skills; esoteric skills, such as knowledge of classical music or fine art, may still be used to distinguish insiders from outsiders.

Exclusion also occurs by disregarding the knowledge that minority groups possess. Indigenous people, for example, have vast stores of traditional, accurate knowledge about the operation and cycles of the environment (Battiste, 2012). Until recently, however, this detailed understanding of ecology was not considered knowledge, since it was not generated by scientific methods (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2013). Foucault used the term **subjugated knowledge** to refer to an entire class of understandings about the nature, causes, and solutions of events that dominant groups selectively devalue or ignore (Foucault, 2003). In doing so, dominant groups maintain control by disqualifying competing perspectives from serious consideration. In curricula from grade school through graduate school, individuals and committees have the power to decide what students are assigned to study and what is ignored. More often than not, the curriculum supports existing social arrangements (Margolis and Romero, 1998).

Subjugated knowledge includes descriptions and explanations of events that dominant groups selectively devalue or ignore.

While provinces and territories are responsible for education in their respective jurisdictions, the federal government has constitutional responsibility for the school system on reserves. This arrangement has created massive disparities, with on-reserve schools historically receiving much less funding than nearby provincially funded schools (French, 2019). The consequences have been devastating for First Nations schools. Students on reserve lack basic services that are offered elsewhere in the province, including access to speech pathologists, counsellors, and psychologists. Few schools on reserve can afford intramural sports programs. Teachers also earn less than their provincially funded counterparts, contributing to burnout and high staff turnover. In such an environment, it is no surprise that school attendance and completion rates are abysmally low.

Credential inflation takes place when, over time, qualifying for specific jobs requires more and more certificates and degrees. Because certificates and degrees are expensive, credential inflation contributes to social exclusion. Credential inflation occurs in part because the technical knowledge required for jobs has increased. For example, because aircraft engines and avionics systems are more complex than they were, say, 75 years ago, working as an airplane mechanic today requires more expertise than it used to. Certification ensures that the airplane mechanic can meet the high technical demands of the job. However, in many jobs, there is a poor fit between credentials and responsibilities. On-the-job training, not a diploma or a degree, often gives people the skills they need to get the job done. Nonetheless, credential inflation takes place partly because employers find it a convenient sorting mechanism. For example, an employer may assume that a university graduate has certain manners, attitudes, and tastes that will be useful in a high-profile managerial position. The effect is to exclude people from less advantaged families from such positions, while favouring individuals from families and groups with the advantages that facilitate education (Collins, 1979; McLean and Rollwagen, 2010; Rampell, 2014).

Credential inflation occurs when, over time, qualifying for specific jobs requires ever more certificates or degrees.

Credential inflation is fuelled by **professionalization**, which occurs when members of an occupation insist that people earn certain credentials to enter the occupation. Professionalization ensures the maintenance of standards. It also keeps earnings high. After all, if "too many" people enter a given profession, the cost of services offered by that profession is bound to fall. Professionalization helps explain why, on average, physicians earn more than university professors who have PhDs. The Canadian Medical Association is a powerful organization that regulates and effectively limits entry into the medical professions. Canadian professors have never been in a position to form such a powerful organization. Because professionalism promotes high standards and high earnings, it has spread widely.

Professionalization occurs to the degree that certain levels and types of schooling are established as criteria for gaining access to an occupation.

Cultural Capital and Control

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu wrote extensively about the role of education in maintaining social inequality. His central theme grew out of an analogy with the theories of Karl Marx. Marx had emphasized the role of economic capital—ownership of the physical

Cultural capital is the stock of learning and skills that increases the chance of securing a superior job.

Pedagogic violence is Bourdieu's term for teachers' application of punishments intended to discourage deviation from the dominant culture.

means of producing wealth—in sustaining inequality. Bourdieu argued that education was central to the creation and transmission of **cultural capital**—learning and skills that ensured superior positions in productive activity (Bourdieu, 1998b; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979).

Cultural capital is expensive and difficult to acquire. Bourdieu emphasized that learning in school involves **pedagogic violence**, the application by teachers of punishments intended to discourage deviation from the dominant culture. Teachers routinely insist on one "correct" way to speak, spell, or do arithmetic. They lay down intricate rules, and individuals must learn to follow them with little pause for reflection or judgment. Such learning involves long periods of disciplinary pressure.

Pedagogic violence requires that students be treated as "docile bodies," to use Foucault's term (Foucault, 1995). That is, education institutions typically treat students as objects that need to be transformed and improved. Foucault's studies show that docile bodies are optimally shaped in environments where space is protected and controlled, where performance expectations are clearly conveyed, where power is centralized, and where surveillance is high. These are characteristics of modern school systems (Monahan and Torres, 2009).

For Bourdieu and Foucault, then, schools are institutions of social control where much of what is taught centres on how to evaluate people. People's tastes in books, music, food, and clothing come to reflect their level of schooling. That is, the books and music that people discuss signal their place in the class structure. Docile bodies are shaped into instruments of conformity and the perpetuation of privilege.

Although schools pressure all students to internalize shared cultural standards, students are not equally receptive. The cultural standard designated as correct or proper in schools matches what families practise at home *to varying degrees*. If your parents are university professors, from your earliest babbling, you will be imitating the speech patterns of the dominant cultural group. Families from less advantaged countries or regions enjoy the least overlap with the ideal. If you come from Bangladesh or even rural Newfoundland, and if your parents lack a higher education, teachers are likely to spend a lot of time correcting your English. Children from such families often struggle to meet teachers' standards.

When teachers evaluate performance, they inevitably reward students who are close to the standards of the dominant culture. Although some students from all backgrounds succeed, a student's stock of cultural capital—of disciplined familiarity with the dominant culture—will influence how difficult or easy it is to achieve success. Advantaged children will find rewards easier to achieve. Children from families with less cultural capital will be punished more and will tend to have less pleasant experiences of school.

A key part of Bourdieu's argument is readily confirmed. Having parents who are highly educated enhances a person's educational attainment. More than one-half of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 obtained a college or university degree if neither of their parents obtained a college or university degree, but almost nine in ten achieved this level of education when both their parents had a college or university degree (Chatoor, MacKay, and Hudak, 2019).

Time for Review

- Explain how economic barriers restricting access to higher education challenge the idea of meritocracy.
- How do credentialism and professionalism in education act as mechanisms of social exclusion?
- How does cultural capital restrict higher educational achievement?

Reproducing Inequality: The Contribution of Symbolic Interactionism

Most sociologists find the conflict perspective on education more credible than the functionalist view. Based on the evidence, they believe that the benefits of education are unequally distributed and lead to the **reproduction of the existing stratification system** (Bowles and Gintis, 2011).

The **reproduction of the existing stratification system** refers to social processes that ensure that offspring enter a rank or class similar or identical to that of their parents.

Factors other than class also matter. Students with higher grades are more likely to advance to higher education. Parental encouragement plays a role, as does support from peers and teachers. However, research consistently finds that such social supports are part of how class advantage is transmitted; wealthier students with more highly educated parents are likely to enjoy more parental, peer, and teacher support. Furthermore, family income and parental education contribute to educational attainment beyond any influence they exert on academic performance and social support insofar as they provide students with cultural capital that assists their advancement (Brown et al., 2016).

Why do schools fail to overcome class differences? Symbolic interactionists emphasize three social mechanisms that operate to reproduce inequality: the hidden curriculum, testing and tracking, and self-fulfilling prophecies.

The Hidden Curriculum

Apart from academic and vocational subjects, students learn a **hidden curriculum** in school (Snyder, 1971; Chapter 4, Socialization). Teachers and school administrators never state that understanding the hidden curriculum contributes powerfully to educational achievement, and they never teach it formally, but "getting it" is central to success.

The **hidden curriculum** in school teaches obedience to authority and conformity to cultural norms.

The content of the hidden curriculum centres on obedience to authority and conformity to cultural norms. Teachers expect students to accept the curriculum, institutional routines, and grading system without question. Students who comply do well; those who do not are headed for trouble. Success stories are most common among middle- and upper-class children who are well-endowed with cultural capital and whose socialization at home has cultivated the hidden curriculum's standards of dress, speech, motivation, and deferred gratification.

Students' connection to and conformity with the hidden curriculum is class-based; it is rooted in their parents' socialization styles. Think about your own early socialization. Did your parents regularly shuttle you from one scheduled appointment to the next, from dental appointments to sports practices to music lessons? Did they check that you did your homework? When you got a B on an assignment, did they encourage you to ask the teacher how you could do better? When supper was being prepared, did they consult you about salad dressing preferences, vegetable choices, and the like? If so, your experience was typically middle-class; you experienced **concerted cultivation** (Lareau, 1987, 2011). Concerted cultivation is a middle-class parenting style that emphasizes the organization of children's after-school time with activities that encourage critical thinking, autonomy, confidence, negotiation with adults, and cultural competencies.

Concerted cultivation is the middle-class parenting style that systematically organizes and directs children's time to activities that prepare them for success in school.

Concerted cultivation stands in clear contrast to the parenting style of working- and lower-class families, which Lareau labels **natural growth**. Parents using this style are much less involved in structuring their children's lives. And when they are involved, it is more to provide direction and orders. Given such differential socialization, it is no surprise that middle-class children are better prepared to engage with teachers, the curriculum, and school expectations. They have been preparing for it since birth.

Natural growth is the parenting style of working- and lower-class families that leaves children largely to their own devices, except when parents demand obedience to authority.

Staying in school requires accepting the terms of the hidden curriculum and feeling positively involved. Researchers at Statistics Canada explored this phenomenon by developing measures of academic and social involvement. Social involvement was defined as not feeling like an outsider and believing that people cared what a student said. Academic involvement consisted of liking teachers, not skipping classes, and regarding class content

as "not useless." Chances of continuing to higher education were twice as high for students who reported social acceptance or positive attitudes toward the formal organization, authority, and procedures of the school (Shaienks and Gluszynski, 2007).

Testing and Tracking

Most schools in Canada are composed of children from various socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Apart from the hidden curriculum, testing and tracking maintain these social inequalities in schools. IQ tests sort students, who are then channelled into high-ability (enriched), middle-ability, and low-ability (special needs) classrooms based on their test scores. Often, the results are classrooms that are stratified by socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity, much like the larger society. For example, Toronto Board of Education research showed that while 20 percent of Black students were enrolled in low-level academic programming, only 10 percent of White students and 3 percent of Asian students were similarly streamed (Henry et al., 2000: 239). Research on four provinces west of Québec shows that, compared with other students, students of parents with higher education are much more likely to be on tracks leading to postsecondary education (Krahn and Taylor, 2007).

Nobody denies that students vary in their abilities and that high-ability students require special challenges to reach their full potential. Nor does anyone deny that underprivileged students tend to score low on IQ tests. The controversial question is whether IQ is mainly genetic or social in origin. If IQ is genetic in origin, then it cannot be changed, so improving the quality of schooling for the underprivileged is arguably a waste of money (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994). If IQ is social in origin, IQ tests and tracking only reinforce social differences that could otherwise be reduced by changing the social circumstances of students.

Most sociologists believe that IQ reflects social standing in great part. That is because all that IQ tests can ever measure is a person's acquired proficiency with a cultural system. How much exposure a person has had to whatever examiners count as correct will play a large role in testing. Even the most able Canadian children would perform abysmally if tested in Mongolian. IQ test results turn on a combination of two factors: (1) how effectively an individual absorbs what his or her environment offers, and (2) how closely his or her environment reflects what the test includes.

Most sociologists believe that members of underprivileged groups tend to score low on IQ tests because they do not have the training and the cultural background needed to score high (Fischer et al., 1996). To support their argument, they point to cases in which changing social circumstances result in changes in IQ scores. For instance, in the first decades of the twentieth century, most Jewish immigrants to North America tested well below average on IQ tests. Their low scores were sometimes used as an argument against Jewish immigration (Gould, 1996; Steinberg, 1989). By 1960, North American Jews tested above average in IQ (Backman, 1972). Since the genetic makeup of Jews has not changed in the past century, why the change in IQ scores? Sociologists point to upward mobility. During the twentieth century, most Jewish immigrants worked hard and moved up the stratification system. As their fortunes improved, they made sure their children had the skills and the cultural resources needed to do well in school. Average IQ scores rose as the social standing of Jews improved.

Tracking (also known as streaming or ability-grouping) was originally implemented as a way of tailoring the school experience to the diverse abilities of students. It relied on IQ tests as assessments of ability. However, IQ tests are not objective assessments of innate potential; they are value-laden social constructions. Consequently, the streaming of students in classrooms stratifies opportunities to learn. High-track students, who generally come from privileged backgrounds, are given better educational options that are denied to low-track, less privileged students (Oakes, 2005). As hundreds of research studies demonstrate, tracking in schools generates inequities that reproduce rather than reduce social inequalities (Mathis, 2013; Van Houtte and Stevens, 2015).

Consider also the "Flynn effect," named after political scientist James R. Flynn, who first pointed it out (Flynn, 1987). Flynn showed that average IQ scores increase over time on every major test, in every age range, and in every industrialized country (Neisser, 1997: 2). He observed increases of as much as 21 points in only 30 years. Typical improvements in test performance were large. For example, differences between children and their grandparents were far greater than differences observed across race and class divides in contemporary societies. This evidence suggests that IQ tests do not provide a fixed measuring rod that captures innate abilities or, for that matter, any sort of trait fixed by genetic endowment. It therefore makes sense to invest in the early education of children from underprivileged families.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

A third social mechanism that operates in schools to reproduce inequality is the self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy is an expectation that helps to cause what it predicts. In a classic study, Ray Rist (1970) revealed how a self-fulfilling prophecy can influence a person's life chances. He found that after just eight days of observing students in a kindergarten classroom, and without giving a formal intelligence test, the teacher felt she could confidently assign the children to one of three tables. She assigned "fast learners" to Table 1, closest to her own desk, and "slow learners" to Table 3, at the back of the class. Students she judged to be "average" were seated at Table 2, in the middle of the classroom.

On what basis did she make these distinctions? Probing the issue, Rist found that the key variable distinguishing the students was social class. Children at Table 1 were overwhelmingly middle class, while those assigned to Tables 2 and 3 were more likely to come from less advantaged homes. The assignment of these children was consequential because the children at Table 1 received more attention, were treated better, and, as the year progressed, came to see themselves as superior to the other children. In contrast, the other students tended to be ignored by the teacher and were referred to by the Table 1 children as "dumb." Unsurprisingly, they did not fare well. The following year, the Grade 1 teacher took note of what the children had accomplished in kindergarten. The Table 1 children were once again assigned to places in the classroom that marked them as superior.

Rist's findings suggest that, rather than valuing all students equally and treating them as if they have equally good prospects, teachers may suspect that disadvantaged students and students who are members of some minority groups are intellectually inferior. In turn, these students may come to feel rejected by teachers, other classmates, and the curriculum. Students from minority groups may also be disadvantaged by overt racism and discrimination. In response, students presumed to be inferior and marginalized in the classroom often cluster together out of resentment and in defiance of authority. Some of them eventually reject academic achievement as a goal. Discipline problems, ranging from apathy to disruptive and illegal behaviour, can result. Consistent with this argument, the dropout rate for Indigenous children (60 percent for on-reserve Indigenous children; 30 percent for off-reserve Indigenous children) is three to six times the rate it is for non-Indigenous children (10 percent) (Anderson and Richards, 2016).

In contrast, research shows that certain strategies can explode the self-fulfilling prophecy and improve academic performance: challenging students from disadvantaged families and those from minority groups; providing them with emotional support and encouragement, including greater recognition in the curriculum to the accomplishments of the groups from which they originate; and creating an environment in which they can relax and achieve.

In sum, schools reproduce the stratification system because of the hidden curriculum, IQ testing and tracking, and the self-fulfilling prophecy that disadvantaged students and students from minority groups are bound to do poorly. These social mechanisms increase the chance that students who are socially marginal and already disadvantaged will earn low grades and will later work at jobs near the bottom of the occupational structure.

Time for Review

- How does the hidden curriculum operate to restrict the educational success of less advantaged students?
- How do IQ testing and tracking result in schools perpetuating social inequality rather than reducing it?
- How can self-fulfilling prophecies contribute to either success or failure in school?

Prospects and Challenges for Education in Canada

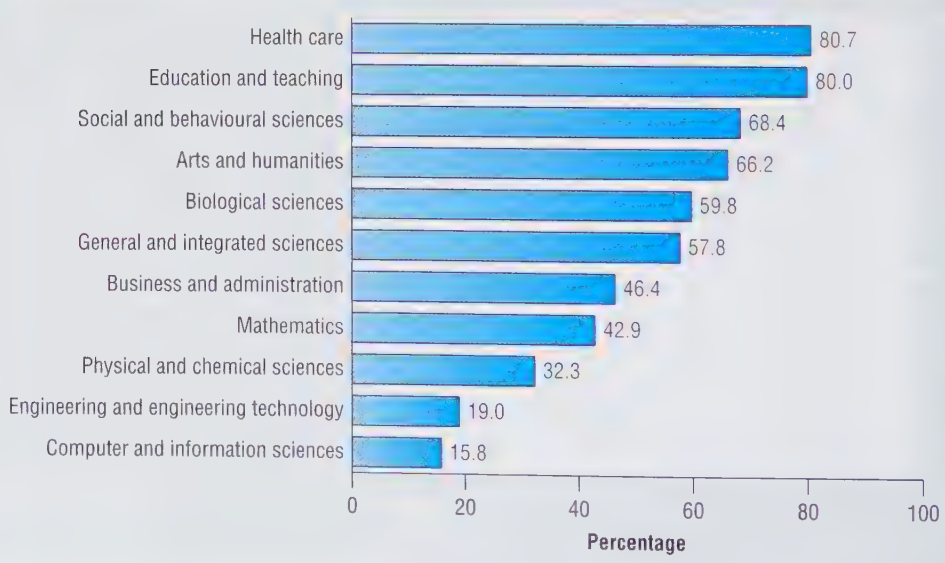
Gender Differences: Feminist Perspectives

With every passing decade, Canadians spend more time in school, and with every passing decade, women's level of education increases relative to men's. Consequently, younger women are substantially better educated than older women are. And women's higher educational attainment is better than men's is in almost every category. Women receive more than 60 percent of university degrees awarded annually (Hango, 2013).

However, as feminists note, these figures mask the ways in which greater female participation in postsecondary education still conforms to traditional gender divisions. Figure 16.4 shows the percentage of women in different fields of study in the first year of a postsecondary degree. In the areas of health care and education, women vastly outnumber men, but in engineering and computer science, there are far more men than women. Canada, like other developed nations, encourages students to study STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and computer science). Nationally, STEM courses are a strategic focus because these areas directly contribute to economic competitiveness and prosperity. In a knowledge-based economy, STEM fields lead to high-paying jobs (Knowles, 2013).

FIGURE 16.4

Percentage of First-Year Undergraduate Students Who Are Women, Canada



Source: Adapted from Wall, Persistence and representation of women in STEM programs. Table 1. Catalogue no. 75-006-X. (Statistics Canada. 2019) Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

The top 10 highest-paying bachelor's degrees are all in STEM fields (Dehaas, 2011b). The resulting pattern is that women participate at higher levels than men in postsecondary education, but tend to study in less scientifically oriented, lower-paying fields (Finnie and Childs, 2018).

Participation and Indigenous Background

THE INDIGENOUS CHALLENGE

Barriers to education other than gender are also substantial. Indigenous educational achievement in Canada is particularly problematic. Indigenous peoples currently compose 5 percent of the population, and this proportion will grow in the upcoming decades. Indigenous people are relatively young, with a median age of 32.1 years, compared with an average age of 41.0 years for other Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2018f). As the general Canadian population ages, Indigenous peoples will compose a growing share of the labour force. Yet despite their strategic importance, Indigenous education outcomes are comparatively weak. The rates of postsecondary enrolment is increasing among Indigenous peoples, but their educational achievements are still substantially and consistently below those of non-Indigenous people (National Indigenous Economic Development Board, 2019).

Figure 16.5 shows the trend for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young adults in Canada. In 2006 and 2016, the percentage of young adult Indigenous Canadians who had not completed high school and were not in school was significantly higher than the percentage for non-Indigenous Canadians. Roughly speaking, in 2016 the percentage of Métis who had not completed high school and were not in school was double the figure for non-Indigenous Canadians. The comparable percentage was quadruple the figure for First Nations. For Inuit, the figure was fully 6.6 times as high. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians shrank between 2006 and 2016, but it grew for the Inuit.

The pattern of low educational achievement among Indigenous peoples is no coincidence. The systematic operation of social forces over time produced this result (Sengupta, 2013). To begin with, Indigenous treaty rights were routinely ignored or their terms reduced (Mercredi and Turpel, 1993). Since before Confederation, Indigenous peoples have not been provided an adequate standard of living that was their right and Canada's constitutional

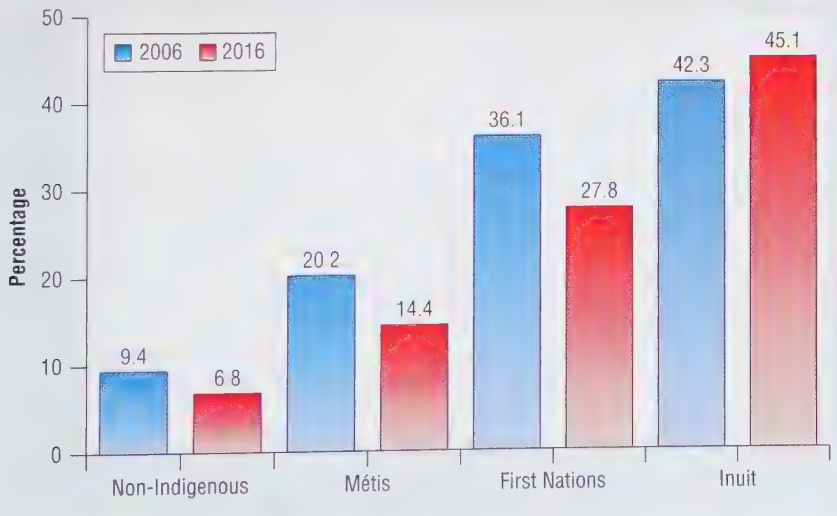


FIGURE 16.5
Percentage, Ages, without a High School Diploma and Not in School

Note: Not in School means not enrolled in any courses, including Internet and correspondence courses, that could be used as credits toward a high-school or postsecondary credential.

Source: Tabulations by Kelly Foley, University of Saskatchewan using public micro data from the 2006 and 2016 Canadian Censuses

obligation. In addition, residential schools (the last of which closed in 1996) produced a legacy of personal and social dysfunction that continues over generations. The goal of these schools was to "take the Indian out of the child" and it attempted to do so with an appalling mixture of physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuse (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012a).

The history of social mistreatment was compounded in the 1960s, when policies permitted more than 20000 Indigenous children to be adopted or fostered by middle-class white families. These children were separated from their families and cultures, and now that they are adults, they face cultural and identity confusion (Sinclair, 2007). In short, a multigenerational assault on the integrity of Indigenous cultures has left a large proportion of these people at the margins of Canadian society, where self-respect is low and personal and social dysfunction are high (Wilk, Maltby, and Cooke, 2017).

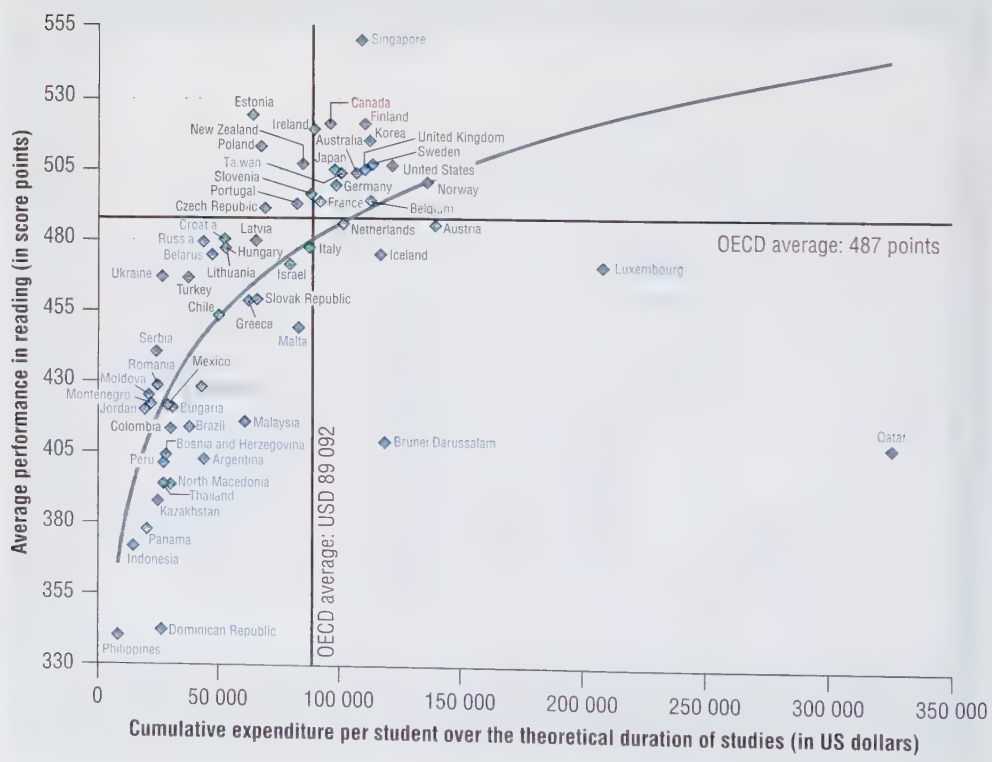
Low educational achievement is only one outcome of this social legacy, but it is one that holds promise for change. Closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational achievement would have positive effects on suicide and incarceration rates, family stability, civic participation, and health outcomes. The economic returns of closing the educational gap are enormous (Sharpe and Arsenault, 2009). For economic and humanistic reasons, the social inequalities of Indigenous education deserve the attention of every Canadian. To facilitate such awareness, a growing number of Canadian universities are making a course in Indigenous studies mandatory (Macdonald, 2015).

International Comparison

As noted earlier, Canada's accomplishment in attaining higher education is impressive when compared with that of other countries. But how does the *quality* of education in Canada compare to the quality of education in other countries? In the 1990s, some observers raised doubts about the quality of Canada's education system. Suspicion grew

FIGURE 16.6

Reading Performance Scores and Spending on Education, Results from the 2018 PISA



Source: Schleicher (2019)

that students were not applying themselves and not learning enough, and that curricula and requirements had become lax.

The critics were in for a surprise. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) organized a Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to assess the academic performance of 15-year-olds. In the first PISA survey in 2000, Canada scored among the top countries in educational achievement. The PISA research has been repeated regularly since then. The 2018 results included 79 countries, with Canada scoring well above the average for rich countries across the three testing dimensions of reading, math, and science.

Moreover, excellence does not come at a high cost. The amount of money spent in Canada for each student falls squarely within the average expenditure for rich countries, yet Canadian students are among the best in the world. Figure 16.6 compares each country's reading performance with what it spends on education. We observe that the United States spends about 30 percent more per student than Canada does, yet its reading score is around 20 points lower than Canada's on the PISA scale. Finally, Canada does better than most countries in terms of providing a good education to students from all socioeconomic classes (Schleicher, 2019). None of this is cause for complacency. We still need to do a lot to improve the quality of Canadian education, particularly for students from disadvantaged families. However, the public's fears about poor and declining educational standards are overdrawn.

Time for Review

- In terms of social equality, how is women's performance in higher education encouraging? How is it discouraging?
- What is the sociological response to someone who asserts that Indigenous people are solely responsible for their low educational achievement?
- What is Canada's international standing in terms of educational achievement?

Summary

1. **What basic functions are performed by school systems?**
   Mass education produces nearly universal literacy and numeracy. In doing so, schools homogenize future citizens by indoctrination into a common culture that is the basis of national solidarity. Schools also sort students and steer them to different class positions as adults.

2. **How does the functionalist view of education differ from the conflict theory view of education?**
   Functionalists argue that education is critically important for industrialization. In their view, the provision of mass public education generates equal opportunity for all citizens. Consequently, differential educational achievement and resulting employment success are the result of individual merit. By contrast, conflict theorists argue that the educational system is biased toward the perpetuation of existing social inequalities. Children from privileged social backgrounds come to school with higher human, social, and cultural capital, which supports high achievement. They are also more attuned to the hidden curriculum.

3. **What factors were responsible for the rise of mass schooling?**
   The main factors responsible for the rise of the mass schooling include the development of the printing press, which led to inexpensive book production; the Protestant Reformation and the spread of democracy, both of which increased demand for literacy; and, most important, industrialization, which required a literate and numerate work force.

4. **What are the manifest and latent functions of education?**
   Industrialization requires the widespread application of science and technology in the economy, making work more specialized and technical, and changing working conditions. The manifest functions of education help to achieve these goals by increasing literacy and numeracy. The latent functions of education include creating a youth culture, keeping children under close surveillance for much of the day so their parents are free to work, restricting job competition and supporting wage levels by keeping young people out of the labour force, promoting national solidarity, and creating "schools of dissent" that challenge authoritarian regimes.

5. **How do economic barriers limit education?**
   Children from richer families are more likely to obtain more education. Education sets up boundaries so that people with less education are excluded from certain social opportunities and positions. Professionalization helps to keeps earnings high by limiting the number of people in given professions.

6. **According to symbolic interactionists, how do schools reproduce inequalities?**
   Schools reproduce inequalities by means of a "hidden curriculum" that values middle-class manners and attitudes; testing and tracking that segregate students by class background; and a self-fulfilling prophecy that lower-class students are bound to perform poorly.

7. **What advances have women made toward educational equality and what challenges do Indigenous peoples face in making similar progress?**
   In recent decades, women have made huge gains in educational achievement. Today, substantially more women than men graduate from university. Still, as feminist scholars point out, gender segregation remains. Women are much less likely to complete degrees in the STEM fields, and they are less likely to attain the high-paying jobs that usually come with such degrees. Educational attainment is growing for most Indigenous Canadians, and the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is shrinking for all but the Intuit. Still, a large gap persists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians overall—a legacy of colonialism, residential schools, segregation, and discrimination.

17 Mass and Social Media

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Explain how Protestantism, democracy, and capitalism influenced the rise of mass media.
- Identify how media make society more cohesive in some respects, less cohesive in others, and foster social inequality.
- Describe how audiences filter, interpret, resist, and even reject media messages.
- Analyze how the media misrepresent women and members of racial minorities.
- Clarify how social media facilitate the creation of multiple realities.
- Recognize that the Internet and social media offer users more freedom than other mass media do but also constrain users in ways that are often not obvious.

Andrey Ezhov/Shutterstock

The Significance of Mass Media and Mass Communication

Fake News, Truth Bubbles, and Media Fragmentation

The mass media are print, radio, television, and other communication technologies. Social media are the apps and websites that allow people to interact and create and share content via cellphone networks and the Internet. While mass media transmit from a few sources to many people, social media transmit from many sources to one, few or many people.

Reporters from the *Washington Post*, one of the most respected newspapers in the world, calculate that Donald Trump made 16 241 false or misleading claims during his first three years in office—an average of nearly 15 lies per day (Kessler, Rizzo, and Kelly, 2020). A political fact-checking organization that won a Pulitzer Prize for its work offers a more nuanced classification of Trump's 742 most newsworthy political statements (see Figure 17.1). Its researchers found that a mere 15 percent were true or mostly true.

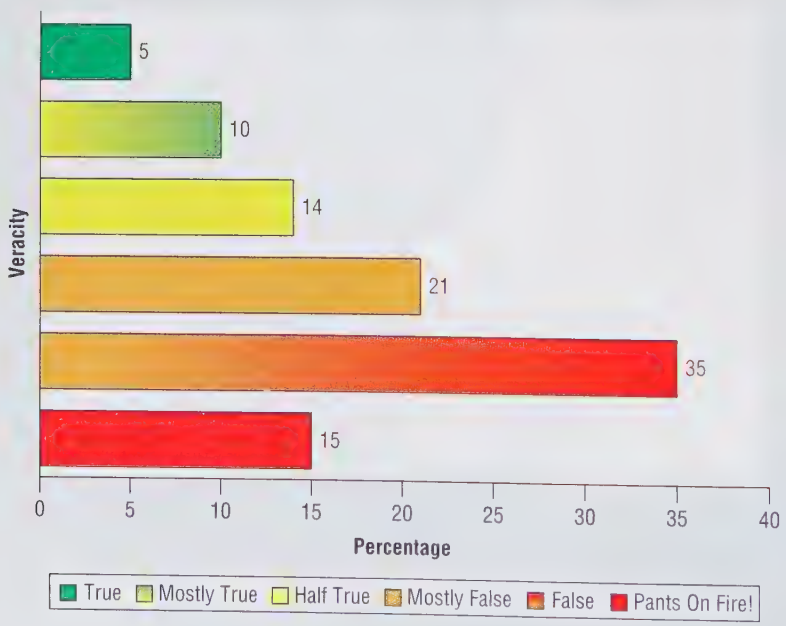
The flip side of Trump's torrent of mistruths is that he loudly proclaims all statements that contradict him are "fake news," regardless of the quality and quantity of evidence that supports them. As a result of Trump's campaign to subvert verifiable truth, Americans' trust in the mass media is low, dropping, and divided along party lines. A 2019 poll showed that just 41 percent of Americans trust the media—69 percent of Democrats and 15 percent of Republicans (Brenan, 2019).

Trump's success is made possible by the capacity of mass media and social media to divide audiences into segments, each surrounded by its own bubble of apparent truth. The **mass media** are print, radio, television, and other communication technologies. **Social media** are the apps and websites that allow people to interact and to create and share content via cellphone and the Internet. While mass media transmit from a few sources to many people, social media transmit from many sources to one, few, or many people.

To appreciate how much has changed in the media landscape over the past seven decades, consider that, until 1960, Canada had just one television network: CBC/Radio Canada (see Box 17.1). The *Globe and Mail* was Canada's "newspaper of record," although a few other newspapers, such as the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *Le Devoir*, were also widely considered authoritative. With little exaggeration, we can say that if something wasn't

FIGURE 17.1

The Veracity of the 742 Most Newsworthy Statements by Donald Trump, 14 February 2011 to 16 January 2020 (in percent)



Source: Data from PolitiFact. 2020. "Latest fact-checks on Donald Trump." https://www.politifact.com/personalities/donald-trump/statements/by/?page=1 (retrieved 21 January 2020).

BOX 17.1 Social Policy

CANADIAN BROADCASTING AND GOVERNMENT REGULATION

In the 1930s, it was not at all obvious that most Canadian mass media would be privately owned and controlled. Here is what Prime Minister R.B. Bennett had to say on the subject in 1932:

> *The use of the air . . . that lies over the . . . land of Canada is a natural resource over which we have complete jurisdiction. . . . I cannot think that any government would be warranted in leaving the air to private exploitation and not reserving it for . . . the use of the people. Without [complete government control of broadcasting from Canadian sources, radio] can never become the agency by which national consciousness may be fostered and national unity . . . strengthened. (quoted in Competition Bureau, 2002)*

What was self-evident to Prime Minister Bennett nine decades ago is a matter of controversy today. Few Canadians still argue for strict government control of the mass media. However, some believe that the mass media should be used to strengthen Canadian culture. Others want a more or less free market in which the great bulk of programming is American in origin or, failing that, American in style.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) was established by an act of Parliament in 1968 as an independent agency responsible for regulating Canada's broadcasting and telecommunications systems. Its self-described mandate is to promote Canadian culture and economic competitiveness ("CRTC's Mandate," 2002). In practice, promoting Canadian culture means ensuring that Canadian content represents 35 percent of the popular music played on English-language commercial radio stations between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Other regulations oversee the content of "ethnic" and French-language stations. Privately owned television stations must achieve a yearly Canadian content level of 60 percent between midnight and 6 p.m. and 50 percent between 6 p.m. and midnight. Canadian content rules for the CBC are more demanding. "Canadian" means that the producer of the program is Canadian, key creative personnel are Canadian, and 75 percent of service costs and postproduction lab costs are paid to Canadians.

As a result of these regulations, about half of TV broadcasts in English Canada and 65 percent of popular music broadcasts are *American*. Moreover, many American TV and radio stations are widely available in Canada via cable, satellite, or the airwaves. (More than three-quarters of Canadian households subscribe to cable or use satellite services; Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, 2017.) It seems reasonable to conclude that at least three-quarters of the TV and popular music to which Canadians have access is American.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. The Internet is disrupting traditional television broadcasting by enabling the delivery of programming unhampered by government regulation. How, if at all, should the Canadian government react to this disruption?
2. Is it possible or desirable to create a media environment with less concentration of ownership?

reported in these news sources, it wasn't worthy of national or regional attention. And if they claimed something was true or false, their judgment was considered definitive. In contrast, cable and satellite TV, streaming services, websites, and talk radio now allow people to obtain information from an almost uncountable number of sources from around the world—and people tend to choose sources that correspond to their own attitudes, prejudices, biases, and individual peculiarities. That is how bubbles of apparent truth are created. People in some of these bubbles no longer rely on reliable and verifiable evidence to support their views. Their attitudes, prejudices, biases, and individual peculiarities form the bases on which they ground their perceived truths. According to one survey, Canada has been less prone to the development of alternative media realities than has the United States—about 70 percent of Canadians trust traditional news reports compared to about 40 percent of Americans—but the change is clearly in the direction of a postmodern world where authoritative truth rests on shaky ground (Adams, 2017; Russell, 2017; see Chapter 3, Culture, on postmodernism).

In that postmodern world, the media are pervasive. The average Canadian now spends 3.7 hours a day watching television, 3.2 hours on the Internet, 2.1 hours listening to the radio and 0.1 hours reading newspapers. The average Canadian between the ages of 18 and 24 is on the Internet for an average of 4.1 hours per day and spends 2.1 hours watching TV, 1.1 hours listening to the radio and 0.1 hours reading newspapers. On average, Canadians spend 38.1 percent of each day interacting with the media. Our second most

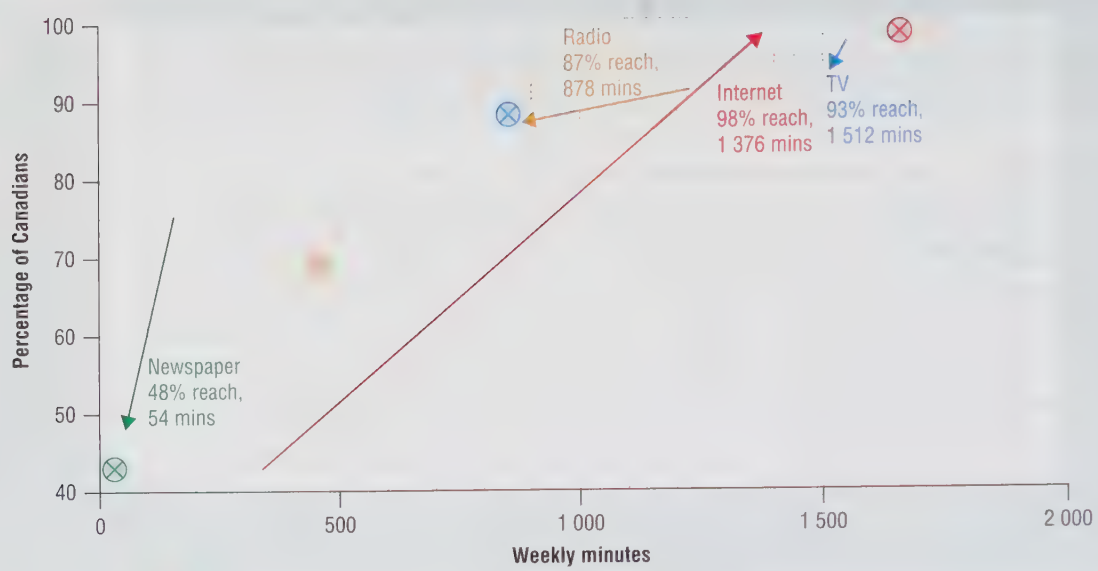


FIGURE 17.2
Weekly Media Usage, Canada, 2001 and 2019

Note: Arrows begin at 2001 and end at 2019. Internet reach measures usage via desktop, laptop, and mobile non-video but estimates other usage (e.g., via mobile video and wearables). Colour-Coded ⊗ Symbol Indicates Usage for 18- to 24-Year-Olds, 2019.

Source: Adapted from Rob Young, "CMUST 2019" (2019)

time-consuming activity is sleeping, which takes up 34.5 percent of our time (Statistics Canada, 2015b; Young, 2016, 2018). Figure 17.2 shows how weekly media usage has changed since 2001.

You might want to keep a tally of your activities for a couple of days to see how you fit into this pattern. Ask yourself, too, what you get out of your interactions with the mass media and social media. Where do you get your ideas about how to dress, how to style your hair, and what music to listen to? Where do your hopes, aspirations, and dreams come from? If you're like most people, much of your reality is generated by the mass media and social media. Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan, who coined the term *global village* in the early 1960s, said the media are extensions of the human body and mind (McLuhan, 1964). Six decades later, it is perhaps more valid to claim that the human body and mind are extensions of the media (Baudrillard, 1983, 1988; Bourdieu, 1998a).

To appreciate fully the impact of the mass media and social media on life today, we need to trace their historical development. That is the first task we set ourselves in the following discussion. We then critically review theories of the media's effects on social life. As you will see, each of these theories contributes to our appreciation of media effects. Finally, we assess developments on the media frontier formed by the Internet and social media. We show that these new media blur the distinction between producer and consumer and have the potential to make media more democratic. However, they also enhance the capacity of governments and media owners to influence and control users.

The Rise of Mass Media and Mass Communications

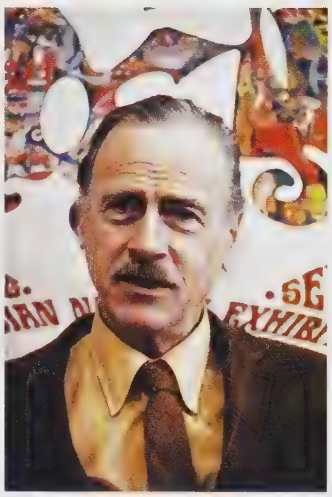
It may be difficult for you to imagine a world without mass media. Yet, as Table 17.1 shows, most mass media are recent inventions. The first system of writing appeared only about 5200 years ago in Mesopotamia (now southern Iraq). Print media became a truly mass phenomenon only in the 1800s. The inexpensive daily newspaper, costing a penny, first appeared in the United States in the 1830s. At that time, long-distance communication required physical transportation. To spread the news, you needed a horse, a railroad or a ship. The slow speed

of communication was costly. For instance, the last military engagement between Britain and the United States in the War of 1812–14 was the Battle of New Orleans. It took place 15 days *after* a peace treaty had been signed. The good news did not reach the troops near the mouth of the Mississippi until they had suffered 2100 casualties, including 320 dead.

The newspaper was the dominant mass medium as late as 1950. However, change was already in the air in 1844, when Samuel Morse sent the first telegraphic signal. From then on, long-distance communication no longer required physical transportation. The transformative power of the new medium was soon evident. For example, until 1883, hundreds of local time zones existed in North America. The correct time was determined by local solar time and was typically maintained by a clock located in a church steeple or a respected jeweller's shop window. Virtually instant communication by telegraph made it possible to coordinate time and establish just six time zones in Canada. Railroad companies spearheaded the move to standardize time. A Canadian civil and railway engineer, Sir Sandford Fleming, was the driving force behind the worldwide adoption of standard time (Blaise, 2001).

Most of the electronic media are creatures of the twentieth century. The first commercial television broadcasts date from the 1920s. The US Department of Defense established ARPANET in 1969. It was designed as a system of communication between computers that would automatically find alternative transmission routes if one or more nodes in the network broke down because of, say, nuclear attack. ARPANET begat the Internet, which in turn begat the hyperlinked system of texts, images, and sounds known as the World Wide Web in 1991. By 2019, about 4.5 billion people used the Web.

Harold Innis, 1920s, photograph by H. James. Library and Archives Canada



Bettman/Getty Images

Harold Innis (left; 1894–1952) and his student, Marshall McLuhan (right, 1911–80), were Canadian pioneers in the study of mass media. Innis (1951) distinguished time-based media that endure but are relatively immobile (such as writing on stone tablets) from space-based media that are relatively short-lived but mobile (such as radio signals). He argued that different types of media help to create different kinds of institutions and values; time-based media foster traditionalism and established religion while space-based media encourage colonization, empire-building, and the growth of secular states and armies. McLuhan (1964) added that the introduction of new media changes the way we perceive and think. For example, printing undermined oral communication, which affected cultures based on hearing. Print media encouraged the development of cultures that are more visually oriented, abstract, individualistic, and rational. Electronic media subsequently undermined print-based culture. For instance, TV, which integrates seeing and hearing, affects its audience more deeply than print does and is more socially inclusive than print is. Moreover, TV allows communication to occur at the speed of light. It thus shrinks the world, creating what McLuhan called a "global village."

Causes of Mass Media Growth

The rise of the mass media can be explained by three main factors, one religious, one political, and one economic:

1. *The Protestant Reformation.* In the sixteenth century, most Catholics relied on priests to tell them what was in the Bible. In 1517, however, Martin Luther protested certain

1450	Movable metal type invented	1976	1st satellite TV broadcast
1702	1st daily newspaper	1983	Cellphone invented
1833	1st mass-circulation newspaper	1991	World Wide Web becomes public
1844	1st telegraph message	1999	Wi-Fi becomes public
1875	1st telephone message	2003	1st smartphone (BlackBerry) released
1877	Phonograph invented	2004	Facebook founded
1895	Motion picture invented	2005	YouTube founded
1901	1st transatlantic wireless message	2006	Twitter founded
1906	1st commercial radio transmission	2007	iPhone released
1928	1st commercial TV broadcast	2010	Instagram founded
1969	ARPANET established	2015	Amazon Echo ("Alexa") released

TABLE 17.1

Media Timeline

The Canadian Press/National Archives

One of the most famous photographs in Canadian history is the driving of the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) on November 7, 1885, at Craigellachie, British Columbia. The man holding the hammer is Donald Smith, who financed much of the construction of the CPR. The tall man standing behind him to his right in the stovepipe hat is Sir Sandford Fleming, the mastermind behind standard time. The railroads spearheaded the introduction of standard time, which could be coordinated thanks to the introduction of the telegraph.

practices of the Church. Among other things, he wanted people to develop a more personal relationship with the Bible. Within 40 years, Luther's new form of Christianity, known as Protestantism, was established in half of Europe. Suddenly, millions of people were being encouraged to read. The Bible became the first mass media product in the West and by far the bestselling book.

Technological improvements in papermaking and printing made the diffusion of the Bible and other books possible. The most significant landmark was Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. In the 50 years after Gutenberg produced his monumental Bible in 1455, more books were produced than in the previous 1000 years. The printed book enabled the widespread diffusion and exchange of ideas. It contributed to the Renaissance (a scholarly and artistic revival that began in Italy around 1300 and spread to all of Europe by 1600), and the rise of modern science.

A remarkable feature of the book is its durability. Many electronic storage media became obsolete just a few years after being introduced; eight-track tapes are icons of the 1970s, and floppy disks are relics of the early 1980s. In contrast, books are still being published today, more than 565 years after Gutenberg published his Bible. More than 23 000 books are published in Canada each year (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2008).

2. *Democratic movements.* A second force that promoted the growth of the mass media was political democracy. From the eighteenth century on, the citizens of France, the United States, and other countries demanded and achieved representation in government. At the same time, they wanted to become literate and gain access to previously restricted centres of learning. Democratic governments, in turn, depended on an informed citizenry and therefore encouraged popular literacy and the growth of a free press.

Today, the mass media, and especially TV, mould our outlook on politics. TV's influence first became evident in the 1960 US presidential election. That was the year of the first televised presidential debate—between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Kennedy smiled. Nixon perspired. Kennedy relaxed. Nixon fidgeted. The election was close, and most analysts believe that Kennedy got the edge simply because 70 million

viewers thought he looked better on TV. Television was thus beginning to redefine the very nature of politics.

Soon, Canadian politicians were hiring "image consultants" who used techniques developed in the United States. Their recommendations included much maligned "negative advertising" techniques. While voters claim they do not approve of negative advertising, it is effective (Kinsella, 2007).

It is commonly claimed that television and other mass media have oversimplified politics. Some analysts say that politics has been reduced to a series of more or less well-managed images, catchy slogans, and ever-shorter uninterrupted comments or "sound bites." From this point of view, candidates are marketed for high office in much the same way that Kellogg's sells breakfast cereal, and a politician's stage presence is more important than his or her policies in determining success at the polls. Political messaging on the Web adds a whole new dimension to the problem, arguably threatening democracy (see Box 13.2 in Chapter 13, Political Economy).

3. *Capitalist industrialization.* The third major force stimulating the growth of the mass media was capitalist industrialization. Modern industries required a literate and numerate workforce. They also needed rapid means of communication to do business efficiently. Moreover, the mass media turned out to be a major source of profit in their own right.

We thus see that the sources of the mass media are deeply embedded in the religious, political, and economic needs of our society. Moreover, the mass media are among the most influential institutions today. How, then, do sociologists explain the effects of the mass media on society? To answer this question, we now summarize the relevant sociological theories.

Time for Review

- The mass media help to shape perceptions of reality.
- Print media dominated until the mid-twentieth century. Since then, electronic media have dominated.
- The Protestant Reformation and the spread of democracy and capitalism were the major factors underlying the growth of the mass media.

Theories of Media Effects

Functionalism

As societies develop, they become larger and more complex. The number of institutions and roles proliferate. Because of the sheer scale of society, face-to-face interaction becomes less viable as a means of communication. As a result, the need increases for new means of coordinating the operation of the various parts of society. For example, people in New Brunswick need at least a general sense of what is happening in Alberta, and they need to share certain basic values with Albertans if they are going to feel they are citizens of the same country. In this regard, the media play an important role. The nineteenth-century German philosopher Georg Hegel once said that the daily ritual of reading the newspaper unites the secular world, just as the ritual of daily prayer once united the Christian world. Stated more generally, his point is valid. The nationwide distribution of newspapers, magazines, movies, television, and the Internet cements the large, socially diverse, and geographically far-flung population of Canada. In a fundamental sense, the nation is an "imagined community," and the mass media make it possible for us to imagine it (Anderson, 1991).

Thus, the media perform an important function by *coordinating* the operation of industrial and postindustrial societies. However, according to functionalist theorists, their significance does not stop there. Media are also important agents of *socialization*. Families have relinquished their former nearly exclusive right to transmit norms, values, and culture in

general. The media have stepped into the breach by reinforcing shared ideals of democracy, competition, justice, and so forth (Chapter 4, Socialization).

A third function of the mass media involves *social control*; to a degree, media help to ensure conformity. For example, news broadcasts, TV dramas, and reality TV programs pay much attention to crime, and they regularly sing the praises of heroes who apprehend and convict criminals. By exposing deviants and showcasing law enforcement officials and model citizens, the mass media reinforce ideas about what kinds of people deserve punishment and what kinds of people deserve rewards. In this way, they reproduce the moral order. As Nobel Prize-winning author Saul Bellow wrote, "a scandal [is] . . . a sort of service to the community" (Bellow, 1964: 18).

The media's fourth and final function is to provide *entertainment*. Television, movies, magazines, and so forth provide pleasure, relaxation, and momentary escape from the tension and tedium of everyday life. It is precisely because some media products require little effort on the part of the audience that they are important. They relieve stress. Moreover, they typically do so in a way that doesn't threaten the social order. Without such escapes, who knows how our daily tensions and frustrations might express themselves?

Conflict Theory

Clearly, functionalism offers insight into the operation of the media. However, conflict theorists have criticized the functional approach for paying insufficient attention to the way media foster social inequality. Specifically, conflict theorists say functionalism exaggerates the degree to which the mass media serve the interests of the entire society. They contend that some people benefit from the media more than others do. In particular, the media favour the interests of dominant classes and political groups.

Conflict theorists argue that dominant classes and political groups benefit disproportionately from the media in two ways. First, the media broadcast beliefs, values, and ideas that create widespread acceptance of the basic structure of society, including its injustices and inequalities. Second, ownership of the media is highly concentrated in the hands of a small number of companies and is highly profitable for them. Thus, the mass media are a source of economic inequality. Let us consider these issues in detail.

MEDIA OWNERSHIP

For decades, most of the Canadian mass media were controlled by fewer than a dozen families. Today, just five multimedia giants control 82 percent of the broadcasting and telecommunications industry: Bell Canada, Rogers, Telus, Shaw, and Quebecor. Control of the newspaper industry is also concentrated. Postmedia, Torstar, and Transcontinental own about two-thirds of the country's newspapers. Using a standard measure of market concentration, Figure 17.3 shows that while the Canadian radio and magazine sectors are not highly concentrated (that is, they are competitive), the broadcast TV, national cable TV, and newspapers sectors are moderately concentrated (moderately non-competitive), while mobile wireless, Internet advertising, and social network sites are highly concentrated (highly non-competitive).

Over time, media concentration has increased. That is, fewer owners control Canada's media with every passing decade. Moreover, it is not just the *degree* of media concentration that has changed. In the 1990s, the *form* of media concentration also began to shift. Until the 1990s, media concentration involved mainly "horizontal integration." Firms tried to control as much production as possible in their particular fields (newspapers, radio, television, and so on). In the 1990s, however, "vertical integration" became much more widespread. Media firms sought to control production and distribution in *many* fields. They became media conglomerates.

Today, a media conglomerate may own any combination of television networks, stations, and production facilities; magazines, newspapers, and book publishers; cable channels and cable systems; sports teams; Web portals; software companies; and cellphone networks. A media conglomerate can create content and deliver it in a variety of forms. For

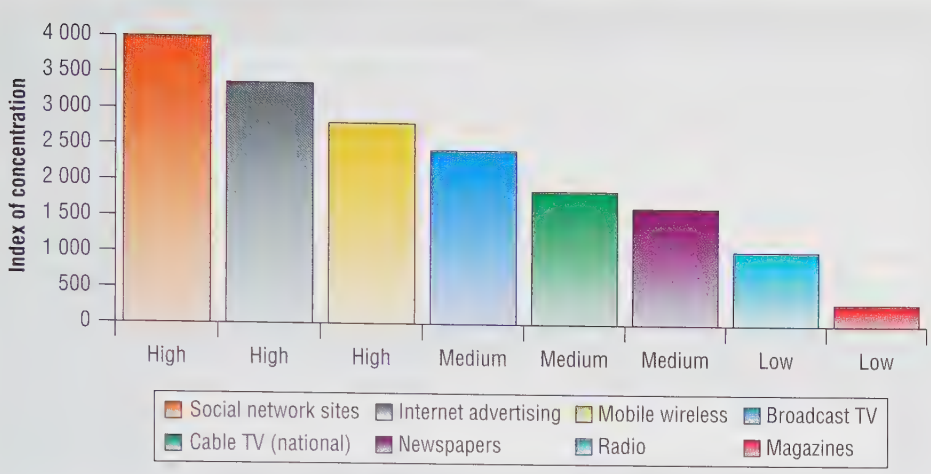


FIGURE 17.3
Media Concentration, Selected Sectors, Canada, 2018

Note: The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) is a measure of market concentration. Conventionally, a score of 2500 or more indicates a highly concentrated market and a score below 1500 indicates a competitive market.

Source: Canadian Media Concentration Project (2019)

instance, Rogers Communications Inc. owns the Toronto Blue Jays, creates sports entertainment, broadcasts it on its television stations, carries the signal to viewers' homes via its cable system, and spins off Blue Jays merchandise.

MEDIA BIAS

Does the concentration of the mass media in fewer and fewer hands deprive the public of independent sources of information, limit the diversity of opinion, and encourage the public to accept their society as it is? Conflict theorists think so. They argue that when a few conglomerates dominate the production of news in particular, they squeeze out alternative points of view. The same is true of authoritarian or totalitarian governments.

According to Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988), several mechanisms help to bias the news in a way that supports powerful interests. These biasing mechanisms include advertising, sourcing, and flak:

- *Advertising.* Most of the revenue earned by television stations, radio stations, newspapers, and magazines comes from advertising by large corporations. According to Herman and Chomsky, these corporations routinely seek to influence the news so it will reflect well on them. In one survey, 93 percent of newspaper editors said advertisers have tried to influence their news reports. Thirty-seven percent of newspaper editors admitted to being influenced by advertisers (Bagdikian, 1997). In addition, big advertisers may influence the news even without overtly trying to influence news carriers. For fear of losing business, news carriers may soften stories that big advertisers might find offensive.
- *Sourcing.* Studies of news-gathering methods show that most news agencies rely heavily on press releases, news conferences, and interviews organized or produced by large corporations and government agencies. These sources routinely slant information to reflect favourably on their policies and preferences. Unofficial news sources are consulted less often. Moreover, unofficial sources generally tend to be used only to provide reactions and minority viewpoints that are secondary to the official story.
- *Flak.* Governments and big corporations routinely attack journalists who depart from official and corporate points of view. Such attacks are most common in non-democratic countries. Harassment and imprisonment of journalists are most frequent in countries like Russia, Vietnam, and Sudan. However, attacks also occur in democracies such as

Mexico, India and the Philippines. Even in the United States under Donald Trump, presidential attacks on journalists are a daily occurrence. Some attacks are violent; between 1992 and 2018, 1378 journalists were murdered for their work worldwide (One Free Press Coalition, 2020).

On the whole, the conflict theorists' arguments are compelling. However, we do not find them completely convincing. After all, if 37 percent of newspaper editors have been influenced by advertisers, then 63 percent have not. News agencies may rely heavily on government and corporate sources, but at least in democracies, such reliance does not stop them from investigating government corruption and corporate crime. News reports are full of examples of mainstream journalistic opposition to government and corporate practices. Even mainstream news sources, although owned by media conglomerates, do not always act like the lapdogs of the powerful.

Still, conflict theorists make a valid point when they restrict their argument to how the mass media support core societal values. In their defence of core values, the mass media *are* virtually unanimous, even in democracies. For example, the mass media in Canada enthusiastically support democracy and capitalism. We cannot think of a single instance of a major Canadian news outlet advocating a fascist government or a socialist economy.

Similarly, the Canadian mass media virtually unanimously endorse consumerism as a way of life. As discussed in Chapter 3, Culture, consumerism is the tendency to define ourselves in terms of the goods and services we purchase. Endorsement of consumerism is evident in the fact that advertising is the media's lifeblood. In Canada, annual spending on advertising exceeds government spending on the country's 147 universities and degree-granting colleges—more than $15 billion, with digital ads accounting for 55 percent of the total and broadcast TV in distant second place at 11 percent (Statista, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2019d).

Finally, we note that, in defence of core values, some governments conduct digital censorship and surveillance of citizens on a mass scale and energetically protect their ability to do so (see Box 17.2).

It is only when the media deal with news stories that touch on less central values that we can witness a diversity of media opinion. *Specific* government and corporate policies are often the subject of heated debate in the mass media, at least in democratic countries. Despite the indisputable concentration of media ownership, the mass media are diverse and often contentious on issues that do not touch on core values.

Interpretive Approaches

The view that the mass media powerfully influence a passive public is common to both functionalist and conflict theorists. Many people believe that violence on TV causes violence in real life, pornography on the magazine stands or online leads to immoral sexual behaviour, and adolescents are more likely to start smoking cigarettes when they see popular movie stars lighting up.

A persuasive argument that leads one to question the effects of the mass media comes from interpretive sociologists, such as symbolic interactionists and interdisciplinary **cultural studies** experts. They use in-depth interviewing and participant observation to study how people interpret media messages.

Cultural studies refer to a popular interdisciplinary area of research. In research on the mass media, cultural studies focus not just on the cultural meanings producers try to transmit but also on the way audiences filter and interpret mass media messages in the context of their own interests, experiences, and values.

British sociologist Stuart Hall (1980), one of the foremost proponents of this approach, emphasizes that people are not empty vessels into which the mass media pour a defined assortment of beliefs, values, and ideas. Rather, audience members take an active role in consuming the products of the mass media. They filter and interpret mass media messages in the context of their own interests, experiences, and values. Thus, in Hall's view, any adequate analysis of the mass media must take account of both the production and the consumption of media products. First, he says, we need to study the meanings intended by the producers. Then we need to study how audiences consume or evaluate media products. Intended and received meanings may diverge; audience members may interpret media messages in ways other than those intended by the producers.

BOX 17.2 Sociology and the Media

GOVERNMENT DIGITAL CENSORSHIP AND SURVEILLANCE

Government digital censorship and surveillance of citizens is a controversial issue. Some people don't mind much if the government restricts what they can access on the Internet and looks into their private affairs. They strongly support government values and say they have nothing to hide. Others value their privacy on principle and think they have a right to access any information they please. They also worry that digital surveillance leads to more restrictive forms of social control that impinge on basic human rights.

China provides a stunning example of digital censorship and surveillance. Websites that the government considers threatening are rendered inaccessible. Communication on the Internet is carefully scanned for keywords that indicate anti-government sentiment and activity, allowing officials to identify troublesome individuals, threaten them into silence and, if necessary, arrest them.

A population of particular concern to the government consists of 11.3 million Uighurs, members of a Muslim minority of Turkic origin living mainly in the province of Xinxiang. The government has blanketed Uighur population centres with surveillance cameras and has even placed cameras in some private homes. Of special interest are signs of what officials consider "religious extremism," such as owning a prayer rug or books about Uighurs, growing a beard, and quitting smoking or drinking. The cameras are linked to face-recognition technology so people can be identified, located, and dealt with as needed. Hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, perhaps more than a million, have been placed in detention camps for "re-education" (Buckley, 2018; Mozur, 2019).

Chinese surveillance may extend beyond the country's borders. Huawei is the world's second-biggest maker of cellphones and associated transmission equipment, including technology needed for fifth generation wireless technology (5G). Worried that Huawei equipment may allow the Chinese government to eavesdrop on users, Australia, Japan, the UK, Germany, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the United States have banned Huawei 5G equipment outright, while many other countries are restricting its use. As of this writing, Canada has yet to reach a decision on the matter.

China may be an extreme example, but many other countries engage in digital surveillance on a vast scale. For instance, without public consent, the National Security Agency (NSA) in the United States conducts mass surveillance of everyone who communicates digitally, scooping up information from the world's servers with a program called XKeyscore. It's like a Google for spies except that instead of searching for public information, the NSA can target private data—an email, a posting to a social network site, a text, a cellphone call. A few years ago, NSA worker Edward Snowden got worried about the reach and intrusiveness of XKeyscore, so he loaded more than a million classified documents regarding NSA surveillance practices onto a microchip and provided reporters with hard evidence of government wrongdoing. The NSA immediately triggered a worldwide hunt for Snowden. While transiting through Moscow on his way to Latin America, Snowden discovered the US government had revoked his passport. He remains in Russia today, his life in limbo.

When three-time Oscar winner Oliver Stone directed a movie about *Snowden* in 2016, he couldn't find US companies willing to finance, produce, or otherwise support the film. Money had to come largely from his own pocket, and most of the movie was filmed in Germany because he worried about government surveillance in the United States. The experience caused Stone to remark that, in the United States, "they say we have freedom of expression, but thought is financed, and thought is controlled, and the media is controlled. This country is very tight on that, and there's no criticism allowed at a certain level" (quoted in Galloway, 2016).

Moviestore/REX/Shutterstock

Edward Snowden (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) takes a lie detector test in *Snowden*.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. To protect its citizens, should government agencies be able to violate privacy laws and spy on the population at large?
2. In one scene, Snowden tapes a piece of paper over the camera mounted on his laptop, worried that someone might be watching. Today, many people do the same. Do you think such actions reflect paranoia or a sensible attempt to maintain privacy?

Even children's television viewing turns out to be complex when viewed through an interpretive lens. Research shows that young children distinguish "make-believe" media violence from real-life violence (Hodge and Tripp, 1986). That may explain why watching *South Park* has not produced a nation of *South Park* clones. Similarly, research shows differences in the way working-class and middle-class women relate to TV. Working-class women, more so than middle-class women, tend to evaluate TV programs in terms of how realistic they are. This critical attitude reduces their ability to identify strongly with many characters, personalities, and storylines. For instance, working-class women know from their own experience that families often don't work the way they are shown on TV. They view the idealized, middle-class nuclear family depicted in some television shows with a mixture of nostalgia and skepticism (Press, 1991).

Age also affects how we relate to television. Senior viewers tend to be selective and focused in their television viewing. In contrast, people who grew up with cable TV and remote control often engage in channel-surfing, conversation, eating, and housework, zoning in and out of programs in anything but an absorbed fashion (Press, 1991). It is inaccurate to think that viewers passively soak up the values embedded in TV programs and then mechanically act on them.

Feminist Approaches

In the 1970s, feminist media researchers focused on the representation—more accurately, the misrepresentation—of women in the mass media. They found that in TV dramas, women tended to be cast as homemakers, secretaries, and in other subordinate roles, while men tended to be cast as professionals and authority figures. Women usually appeared in domestic settings, men in public settings. Advertising targeted only women as purchasers of household products and appliances.

Furthermore, researchers discovered that the news rarely mentioned issues of importance for many women, such as wage discrimination in the paid labour force, sexual harassment and abuse, child-care problems, and so on. News reports sometimes trivialized or denounced the women's movement. Newsworthy issues (the economy, party politics, international affairs, and crime) were associated with men, and men were much more likely than women were to be used as news sources and to deliver the news (Watkins and Emerson, 2000: 152–53).

Most of this early feminist research assumed that audiences are passive. Analysts argued that the mass media portray women in stereotypical fashion; audience members recognize and accept the stereotypes as normal and even natural; and the mass media thereby reinforce existing gender inequalities. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, feminist researchers criticized this simple formula. Influenced by cultural studies, they realized that audience members selectively interpret media messages and sometimes even contest them.

A good example of this subtler and less deterministic approach is a study by Andrea Press and Elizabeth Cole (1999) of audience reaction to abortion as portrayed on TV shows. Over four years, Press and Cole conducted 34 discussion groups involving 108 women. The women watched three TV programs focusing on abortion and then discussed their own attitudes and their reactions to the shows. The programs were pro-choice and dealt with women who chose abortion to avoid poverty.

Press and Cole found complex, ambivalent, and sometimes contradictory attitudes toward abortion among audience members. However, four distinct clusters of opinion emerged:

1. *Pro-life women from all social classes* formed the most homogeneous group. They thought abortion is never justified. On principle, they rejected the mass media's justifications for abortion.
2. *Pro-choice working-class women who thought of themselves as members of the working class* adopted a pro-choice stand as a survival strategy, not on principle. They did not

condone abortion, but they feared that laws restricting abortion would be applied prejudicially against women of their class. Therefore, they opposed any such restrictions. At the same time, they rejected the TV message that financial hardship justifies abortion.

3. *Pro-choice working-class women who aspired to middle-class status* distanced themselves from the "reckless" members of their own class who sought abortions on the TV shows. They tolerated abortion for such people but they rejected it for themselves and for other "responsible" women.
4. *Pro-choice middle-class women* believed that only an individual woman's feelings can determine whether abortion is right or wrong in her own case. Many pro-choice middle-class women had deep reservations about abortion, and many of them rejected it as an option for themselves. However, they staunchly defended the right of all women, especially the kind of women portrayed in the TV shows they watched, to choose abortion.

One of the most striking aspects of Press and Cole's findings is that, for different reasons, three of the four categories of audience members (categories 1, 2, and 3) were highly skeptical of TV portrayals of the abortion issue. Their class position and attitudes acted as filters influencing how they reacted to TV shows and how they viewed the abortion issue. Moreover, three of the four categories of audience members (categories 2, 3, and 4) rejected the simple pro-choice versus pro-life dichotomy often portrayed by the mass media. Many pro-choice women expressed ambivalence about abortion and even rejected it as an option for themselves. We must conclude that real women are typically more complicated than the stereotypes promoted in the mass media, and that women in the audience are typically aware of this discrepancy.

In recent years, some feminists have focused on the capacity of the mass media to reproduce and change the system of *racial* inequality in North American society. In the work of these scholars, the twin issues of female misrepresentation and active audience interpretation reappear, this time with a racial twist. On the one hand, they find that certain stereotypical images of women of colour recur in the mass media. Black women, for example, often appear in the role of the welfare mother, the highly sexualized Jezebel, or the mammy.

On the other hand, feminist scholars also recognize that some mass media, especially independent filmmaking and popular music, have enabled women of colour to challenge these stereotypes. Especially noteworthy in this regard are the music and videos of Erykah Badu, Missy Elliott, Lauryn Hill, Beyoncé Knowles, and Alicia Keys. These artists write and produce their own music. They often direct their own videos. Their work is a running critical commentary on real-world issues confronting young Black women. Thus, in terms of both production and content, their work breaks down the established roles and images of Black women in North America (Watkins and Emerson, 2000).

Some stereotypes persist, but the way in which the mass media treat women and members of various minority groups has improved over time. The area that has seen most improvement is North American children's TV programming. Thus, in 2018, 52 percent of characters in children's TV were female and 46 percent of them were depicted as leaders (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2020). Popular films show less progress. Women and people with disabilities are substantially underrepresented in leading roles. Women and LGBTQ+ people are substantially overrepresented in highly sexualized roles. People of colour are substantially overrepresented in criminal roles (see Figure 17.4). Research also suggests that audiences and artists are hardly passive vehicles of these stereotypes, instead struggling to diversify the way the mass media characterize them.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is the final theoretical approach to media influence that we will consider.

In Chapter 1, A Sociological Compass, you learned that poststructuralist sociologists emphasize the increasing fluidity and multiplexity of social structure and culture. For them, the era of rigid, authoritative social relations lies in the past. Today, social relations and what people think they know about them are in a state of flux. Multiple realities exist, each with

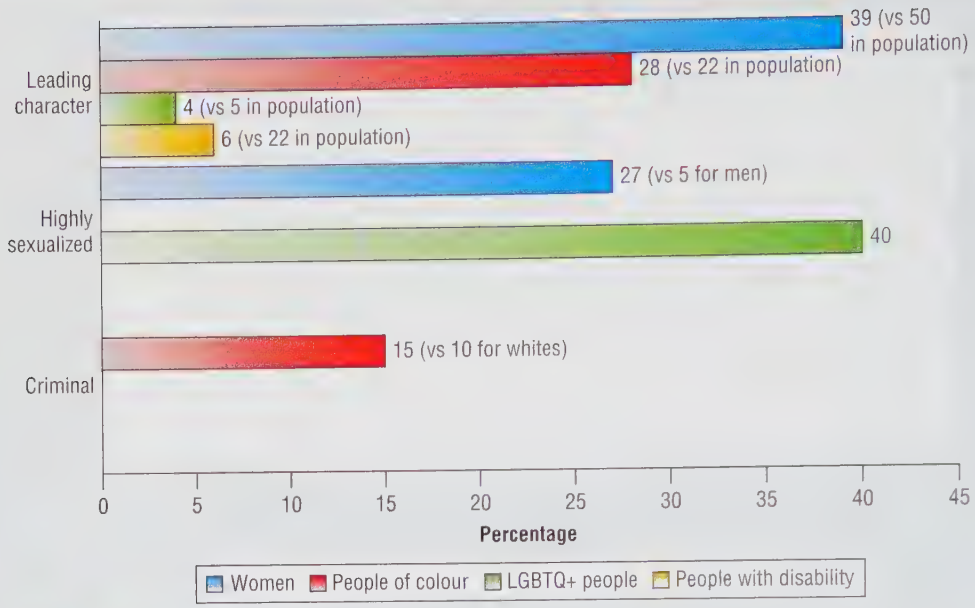


FIGURE 17.4
Representation in the 100 Most Popular Films, 2018

Note: The 2013 Canadian Community Health Survey reported that 3 percent of Canadians identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Taking into account other sexual minorities and likely change over time, we estimate that 5 percent of Canadians identify as LGBTQ+.

Source: Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (2020)

its unique criteria for truth. For poststructuralists, the media, especially social media, play a major role in creating these multiple realities.

According to poststructuralists, mass media such as TV and movies simulate or imitate reality. Moreover, these simulations have become so pervasive that they come to define reality. In a sense, the simulations provided by mass media become more real than reality itself. As a result, poststructuralists argue, people experience a much-weakened capacity to comprehend reality as it actually is (Baudrillard, 1994).

Social media take this process a step farther. Everyone with a Web-enabled device can easily create social media content, find like-minded people, and share ideas with them. This means it is now possible for people to live inside a truth bubble that reinforces their values and preferences while excluding contradictory viewpoints. It also means that wealthy and powerful people have the means to create truth bubbles that attract many others. The discussion of fake news with which we began this chapter illustrates this process, as does Box 13.2, Sociology and the Media: How Social Media Helped Trump Win.

When it comes to diffusion, false stories on social media enjoy a big advantage over truthful accounts. Data scientists analyzed about 126 000 false and verified true stories tweeted and retweeted around 3 million times from 2006 to 2017. They found that false stories reached more people and spread much faster than accurate stories because of their novelty and sensationalism; unlike people who commented on accurate stories, those who commented on false stories routinely displayed surprise, disgust, and fear (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral, 2018). We witnessed an example of how Twitter can help generate panic in early 2020, when stories about coronavirus started popping up. Unverified and untrue reports of cover-ups of unreported deaths, escapes from quarantine, and people collapsing in the streets led the number of fear-mongering tweets and retweets to increase from 25 000 a day to half a million a day between January 20 and 23. One person tweeted: "This guy who escaped from Wuhan yesterday will be arrived at Toronto from Guangzhou today. Please quarantine him." The manager of the Twitter account at Pearson Airport in Toronto hardly helped matters by lending legitimacy to the unverified report from an unknown individual: "Thank you for

letting us know!! We will share this information with Canada Immigration" (quoted in Miller, 2020). The point is that social media not only facilitate the creation of truth bubbles but ensure that most truth bubbles contain misinformation that spreads far, wide, and fast.

Time for Review

- Functionalism identifies the main social effects of mass media: coordination, socialization, social control, and entertainment. By performing these functions, the mass media help make social order possible.
- Conflict theory notes that media concentration and control by a privileged minority contribute to economic inequality and maintain the core values of a stratified social order.
- Interpretive approaches remind us that audience members are people, not programmable robots. We filter, interpret, resist, and sometimes reject media messages according to our own experience, interests, and values.
- Feminist approaches highlight the misrepresentation of women and members of racial minorities in the mass media. They also emphasize the ways in which women and members of racial minorities have successfully challenged these misrepresentations and sought to diversify the characterization of race and gender in the mass media.
- Poststructuralism insists that social relations and what people think they know about them are in a state of flux. Multiple realities exist, each with its unique criteria for truth. For poststructuralists, the media, especially social media, play a major role in creating these multiple realities.

Control and Resistance on the Internet

The interaction between audiences and the traditional mass media (television, radio, and newspapers) is generally weighted in favour of the media. Audience members do not mindlessly absorb messages from these sources. However, they exercise little control over content.

In contrast, the Internet, especially its social media applications, offers users more creative opportunities than do traditional mass media. By partially blurring the distinction between producer and consumer, the Internet has the potential to make media somewhat more democratic. To develop this idea, we first consider the forces that restrict Internet access, augment the power of media conglomerates, and reinforce inequality. We then discuss countertrends.

Control

ACCESS

The Internet requires an expensive infrastructure of personal computers, servers, and routers; an elaborate network of fibre-optic, copper-twist, and coaxial cables; and many other components. The infrastructure needs to be paid for, primarily by users. As a result, access is not open to everyone. In Canada, households that are richer, better educated, urban, and younger are most likely to enjoy Internet access (Statistics Canada, 2010d). More than 90 percent of Canadian households have access to the Internet, but about three-quarters of households in Indigenous communities have no access to fast service (50 megabits per second download/10 megabits per second upload) (Government of Canada, 2019b). Even in urban areas, Internet service providers charge more for faster service and quantity of downloaded information, a circumstance that limits access to Internet resources for people in lower socioeconomic strata. Nor is Internet access evenly

distributed globally, as Figure 17.5 shows. In about two dozen rich countries, 90 percent or more of the people are connected to the Internet at home, but the percentage is in the 10 percent to 30 percent range in most of Africa and Asia.

CONTENT

According to some analysts, US domination is another striking feature of Internet content. For instance, only two non-Americans—Justin Bieber and Narendra Modi, India's prime minister—crack the top 20 most-followed Twitter accounts (SocialBlade, 2020). Fourteen of the 20 most visited websites globally are American (Hardwick, 2019). Some analysts say that US domination of the Web is an example of **media imperialism**, the control of a mass medium by a single national culture and the undermining of other national cultures.

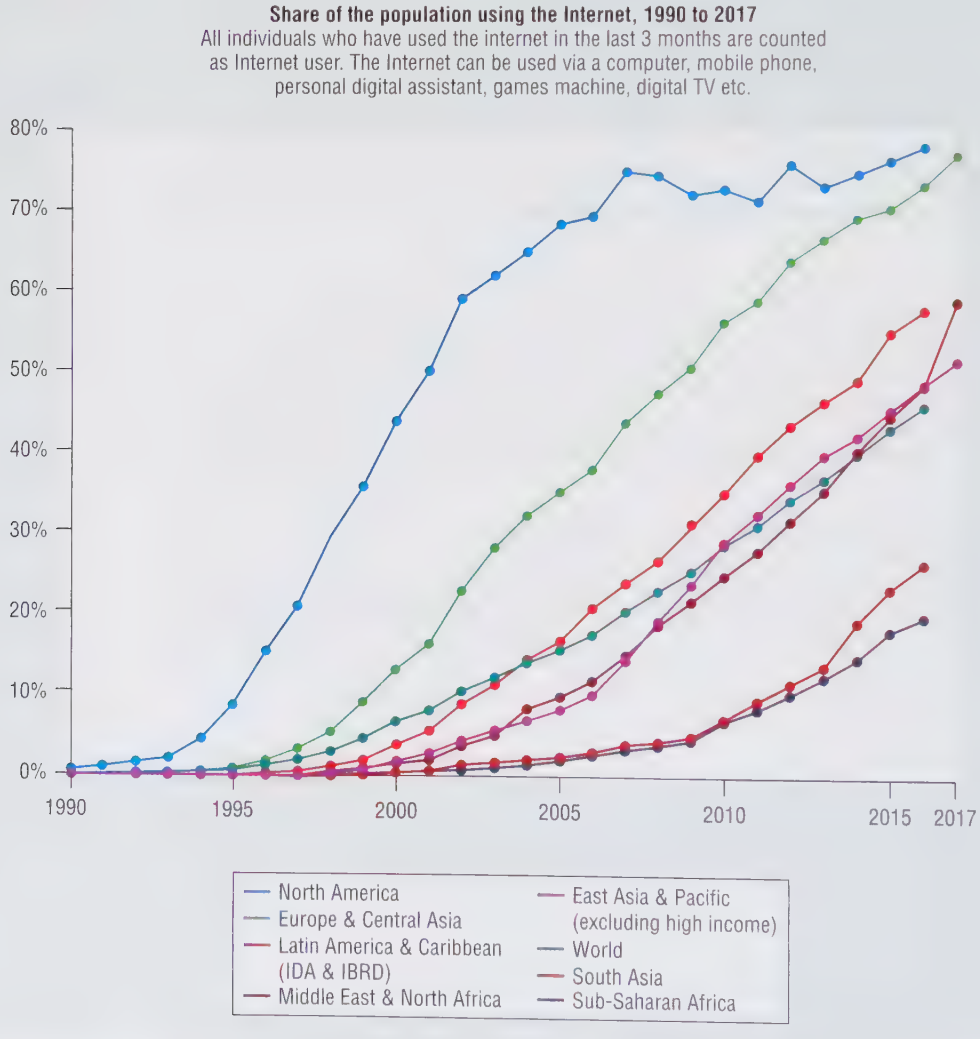
Media imperialism is the domination of a mass medium by a single national culture and the undermining of other national cultures.

ADVERTISING

Advertising is a prime example of top-down influence. It is by far the main source of revenue for most big Internet companies. Eighty-five percent of Google's revenue came from advertising in 2018. For Facebook in 2019, the figure was 98.5 percent (Johnston, 2020; Rexaline, 2018).

FIGURE 17.5

Share of the Population Using the Internet, 2017



Source: Roser, Ritchie, and Ortiz-Ospina (2020)

Advertising seeks to influence (some would say "manipulate") consumers to buy products and services. Companies invest a lot in advertising because it works—and the Internet provides advertisers with ways to influence consumers more effectively than newspaper, magazine, radio, and TV ads do. For instance, Google Search, YouTube (owned by Google), and other Internet services routinely collect information on which websites you visit, what you buy online, your locale, and your demographic characteristics. Advertisers buy this information so they can target specific market segments. It is no accident that when Indigo or Amazon suggests books for you to consider purchasing, they recommend titles that probably interest you. Nor should you be surprised to see a pop-up announcing that your favourite rock star is holding a concert in your city next month. Such ads are tailored to suit your tastes and interests and are therefore more cost-effective than, say, a roadside billboard for a refrigerator you don't need.

ALGORITHMS

In 2016, investigators discovered that, in some cases, the autocomplete function in Google's search engine promoted information that was false or slanted with extreme right-wing bias. Investigators typed "climate change is" into the search engine and the first autocomplete result was "a hoax." When they typed "are women," the autocomplete function responded with "evil," while typing "are Muslims" produced "bad." Investigators also discovered that on job sites, men are much more likely than women are to see ads for high-paying executive jobs popping up on their screen. When Flickr introduced image recognition tools, Black people were sometimes tagged as "apes" or "animals" (Carpenter, 2016; Gibbs, 2016; Solon and Levin, 2016).

People write algorithms—the rules that computers follow to solve problems—to drive the Internet and social media. To date, the biases they have incorporated into their algorithms tend to favour privileged and/or right-wing groups. This circumstance has led some mathematicians and computer scientists to identify algorithms on the Internet and in social media that increase inequality and threaten democracy. One expert in the field labelled such biased algorithms "weapons of math destruction" (O'Neil, 2016).

Resistance

Some forms of Internet control are resisted by countertrends. For example, some vocal individuals and organizations oppose user-based billing (the more you use and the faster you download it, the more you pay). They argue that technology has lowered costs so much that user-based billing is just a money grab by some of the most profitable Internet businesses—an unfair practice that restricts access to the Internet. Advocates of **net neutrality** claim that unrestricted access maximizes freedom of expression, innovation, and user choice. They also say that net neutrality provides access to online materials that offer education, information, and entertainment to people who would otherwise not be able to afford these benefits.

Net neutrality is the principle that Internet service providers should not restrict access to any online content.

While the debate between Internet service providers and supporters of net neutrality continues, one thing is clear. Media conglomerates can never fully dominate the Internet because it is the first mass medium that makes it relatively easy for consumers to become producers. Every minute, people upload 500 hours of digital video to YouTube (DMR, 2020). Nearly all laptops sport webcams, so video chats through Skype or other services are commonplace. Facebook boasts 2.38 billion monthly users, nearly two-thirds of whom log on daily (Hutchinson, 2019). Canadians are the most active Facebook users in the world. Add to this picture the many millions of personal websites, public-access cameras, alternate reality and multiple-user gaming sites, and discussion groups devoted to every imaginable topic, and we must temper the image of the Internet and social media as subject to increasing domination by large conglomerates. In some respects, the trend is contrary: Individual users are making independent, creative contributions to Internet and social media growth.

Using social media affects people's identity (how we see ourselves), social relations (the patterned connections we form with others), and social activism (the ways we seek to cause social change) (Bookman, 2014). Let's conclude our discussion of social media by briefly considering each of these issues in turn.

IDENTITY

Social media offer people opportunities to manipulate the way they present themselves to others and explore aspects of their selves that they may suppress in embodied social interaction. Of course, people do not change their identities just because they can. For most of us, the difference between self-presentation offline and online is typically modest. Nonetheless, differences exist, and they change our self-conceptions in ways that are usually minor but sometimes major. For example, people are often more assertive online than they are offline, and once they learn to be bolder, many carry the lesson into real life to a degree. In some cases, people "in the closet" with respect to their sexual preferences use social media as a gateway to "coming out." In these and other ways, social media often serve as "identity workshops" (Turkle, 1995).

On the other hand, some social media users are well aware that the selves they present on Facebook and Instagram are problematic. Increasingly, people are concerned they might reveal something that would stand in the way of their getting a job they want or they recognize that they construct their online selves to place themselves in the best possible light, thereby losing the opportunity to express themselves authentically. Because of these concerns, some Instagram users have started creating "finsta" and "rinsta" accounts (Pringle, 2017). A rinsta is a real Instagram account. It's the one a stranger would find by looking you up, so it presents you as you would like to be seen by, say, a potential employer. A finsta is a fake Instagram account. It uses a screen name based on an inside joke or identifying characteristic that only your close friends would know. On a finsta account, you can be your authentic self.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

In the 1990s, some analysts expected the Internet to isolate people, creating private worlds that would lead to the decline of family and community life. Others held the opposite opinion—that the Internet would create opportunities for people to form new communities based not on geographical proximity or blood ties but on common interests. Both scenarios contain an element of truth but both fail as assessments of the Internet's and social media's overall impact on social relations. A few people do retire to the basement, keep the curtains on their windows tightly drawn, avoid face-to-face interaction, and spend their days in virtual worlds. Some people do form close and even intimate friendships online in communities of common interest, dropping nearly all real-world social relations. For most people, however, social media have not replaced real life but burrowed into it and become part of it (Baym, 2015a, 2015b; Wellman, 2014).

Thus, research shows that people tend to use social media to *augment* telephone and face-to-face communication, not replace them. Most of the people we email, message, and text are people we already know, and when we use social media to contact people we don't know, it is often to see whether we want to proceed to a phone call or a face-to-face meeting.

For most people, then, social media increase interaction and build community—but not community in the traditional sense. Traditional communities are fixed locations. To interact in them, you need to reside in them physically. You don't get to select community members. Everybody knows your business. In contrast, social media allow for the crystallization of communities that are multiplex (you can belong to many of them), variegated (you can decide how intimately you want to interact with different members of different communities), personalized (you can decide who to allow in and who to exclude), portable (you can take them with you), and ubiquitous (you can take them anywhere you please). Social media thus breed what one sociologist calls "networked individualism" (Wellman, 2014).

Nonetheless, some people spend so much time managing online profiles and relationships, and instantly responding to e-mails, tweets, and Facebook messages, that social media may be causing a decline in the depth and quality of face-to-face social interaction. Going on holiday with the family, having dinner with friends, and enjoying the presence of others in other traditional ways are now punctuated with social media interruptions and distractions that can have consequences for our well-being. One survey showed that the sense of well-being of people between the ages of 18 and 34 declined the more frequently they communicated with acquaintances and co-workers (as opposed to relatives and close friends) using a variety of platforms (mobile and landline phones; desktop and laptop computers). In other words, frequent electronic communication with many acquaintances and co-workers on multiple platforms seems to burden younger people and make them less happy (Chan, 2014). Research also shows that the more often people use Facebook and the larger the size of their Facebook network, the more likely they are to be victimized by scam artists (Vishwanath, 2015). We thus see that an excess of networked individualism can have more than one downside.

SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Finally, social media open up new ways of engaging in social change. People advocate and spread awareness of a wide variety of environmental, human rights, and other causes using blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and activist websites containing reports, news, videos, announcements, and Web links. People also use social media to mobilize others for demonstrations, petitions, meetings, support concerts, and fundraising. The most celebrated use of social media for these purposes occurred during the heyday of the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring in 2010–11 and the Idle No More movement in Canada in 2012. Many analysts expect that the role of social media in advocating and mobilizing for social and political change will grow in the coming years.

Other researchers are not so sure. They identify two countertrends. First, they observe that in Syria, Egypt, Russia, China, and other non-democratic countries, authorities systematically monitor and analyze social media messages. Doing so allows them to identify, harass, and arrest anti-regime activists, including those who support democratization. Some observers worry about online surveillance in democratic countries, too, fearing that by monitoring social media, authorities will inhibit legitimate radical discourse.

A second countertrend involves social media acting as a replacement for high-risk activism. By, say, allowing people to sign an online petition or contribute a dollar to a cause instead of engaging in an illegal strike or a demonstration, social media may encourage "slacktivism" rather than activism (Brym et al., 2014; Gunitsky, 2015). Thus, in addition to facilitating advocacy and mobilization for social and political change, social media can have the opposite effect.

In sum, the Internet is a medium unlike any other in the sense that it provides unique opportunities for user autonomy and creativity. To be sure, it also increases opportunities for corporations and authorities to engage in the homogenization, surveillance, and possible control of users (Lyon, 2007). But at least on this medium, users enjoy the capacity to resist.

Time for Review

- Internet access is unequally distributed, with wealthier, better educated, and younger people enjoying more access.
- Internet content is dominated by US perspectives and interests.
- As the rise of social media demonstrates, corporate domination of Internet-based mass media is continuously challenged by the creative contributions of individuals and groups of content producers.

Summary

1. **Which historical forces stimulated the growth of the mass media?**
   The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century encouraged people to read the Bible themselves. The democratic movements that began in the late eighteenth century encouraged people to demand literacy. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, capitalist industrialization required rapid means of communication and fostered the mass media as important sources of profit.

2. **How do the media make society more cohesive yet foster social inequality?**
   According to functionalists, the mass media coordinate society, exercise social control, and socialize and entertain people. Conflict theorists stress that the mass media reinforce social inequality by acting as sources of profit for the few people who control media conglomerates and promoting core values that help legitimize the existing social order.

3. **How do audiences filter, interpret, resist, and even reject media messages?**
   In contrast to functionalist and conflict theorists, interpretive sociologists, including symbolic interactionists, have demonstrated that audiences typically filter, interpret, and sometimes even resist and reject media messages according to their interests and values.

4. **How do the media misrepresent women and members of racial minorities?**
   Feminist approaches to media analysis emphasize the degree to which the mass media perpetuate traditional gender and racial stereotypes, although they also recognize significant improvement in this regard in recent decades.

5. **How do social media facilitate the creation of multiple realities?**
   Poststructuralism emphasizes that social relations and what people think they know about them are in a state of flux. Multiple realities exist, each with its unique criteria for truth. Social media facilitate the creation of multiple realities because they allow false stories, which tend to be novel and sensationalistic, to spread faster and reach more people than do verified true stories.

6. **How does the Internet differ from other mass media?**
   The Internet offers users more opportunities to create content than do other mass media. Social media in particular allow people more freedom to mould their identities, forge new types of social relations, and engage in activism. However, anti-democratic forces also exist. They include unequal access, the dominance of US content, online advertising, and biased algorithms.

18 Collective Action and Social Movements

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Recognize that when people act together to correct perceived injustice, their actions may appear spontaneous, but they are usually calculated and reflect underlying social organization.
- Identify the structural conditions associated with aggrieved groups acting in unison to correct perceived injustice.
- Analyze how successful social movement leaders make their activities, ideas, and goals congruent with the interests, beliefs, and values of potential recruits to their movement.
- Trace the history of social movements as a struggle for the acquisition of constantly broadening citizenship rights—and opposition to those struggles.
- List the strengths and weaknesses of social movements that are based largely on social media.

Sarah Morris/Getty Images

#MeToo

The *New York Times* broke the story on October 5, 2017. Its investigative reporters had uncovered multiple allegations of sexual harassment and rape against film producer Harvey Weinstein stretching over three decades. Within weeks, 50 such allegations had surfaced. By December 2019, 14 women had accused Weinstein of rape and 92 of other forms of sexual assault or harassment. The list includes Rosanna Arquette, Kate Beckinsale, Cate Blanchett, Heather Graham, Daryl Hannah, Salma Hayek, Angelina Jolie, Ashley Judd, Julianna Margulies, Rose McGowan, Gwyneth Paltrow, Mira Sorvino, and Uma Thurman (Kantor and Twohey, 2017; "Harvey Weinstein," 2019). To keep the women quiet, Weinstein had offered some of them jobs, paid off others, and threatened to ruin the careers of still others. But now all hell had broken loose.

The #MeToo movement had been initiated a decade earlier by Black feminist activist Tarana Burke. However, the 2017 spike was motivated by a message that actor Alyssa Milano posted on her Twitter account. It called on victims of sexual assault and harassment to post #MeToo as an update. In the wake of the Weinstein affair, her aim was to spread awareness of just how common sex crimes against women are. She succeeded. Millions of women declared #MeToo. The Canadian Press news agency named sexual assault and harassment the story of the year, and *Time* magazine's annual "Person of the Year" cover story was dedicated to "The Silence Breakers."

The barriers to reporting sexual assault and harassment are daunting. Women fear reprisal, re-traumatization, and humiliation. These are some of the main reasons why just 5 percent of sexual assaults in Canada are reported to police (Moreau, 2019). Additionally, most women don't report sex crimes because they expect the police will find their allegations "unfounded"; an investigation of 870 Canadian police forces found that this is the fate of 20 percent of incidents reported to the police, although only 2 percent to 8 percent of cases are actually without merit (Doolittle, 2017).

Encouraged by the #MeToo movement, the number of sexual assaults reported to Canadian police trended upward in 2017 and 2018. Public debate about sexual harassment in the workplace surged. In 2018, the federal government fast-tracked tougher legislation on sexual harassment in federally regulated workplaces and allocated about $20 million a year to expanding its Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence in the wider society.

Collective action occurs when people act in unison to bring about or resist social, political, and economic change.

Routine collective action is collective action that follows a well-established pattern of behaviour and is nonviolent.

Non-routine collective action is collective action that ignores convention and may be violent.

Social movements are institutionalized or bureaucratized forms of collective action aimed at changing or resisting change to the social, political, and/or economic order.

Is #MeToo a Social Movement?

From a sociological point of view, what exactly is #MeToo? Clearly, it is a form of **collective action**, which involves people acting together to bring about or resist social, political, or economic change. More precisely, it is an instance of **routine collective action** insofar as it follows a well-established pattern of behaviour and is nonviolent. It is not an instance of **non-routine collective action**, which ignores convention and may be violent. Mobs and riots are forms of non-routine collective action.

Is #MeToo a **social movement**? Conventionally understood, a social movement is formed when participants in routine collective action bureaucratize their activities by, say, formalizing rules of conduct, hiring a staff, organizing a publicity office, creating a speakers bureau, and so on. A social move-

Alyssa Milano

Ga Fullner/Shutterstock

Alyssa Milano
@Alyssa_Milano
If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet.
Me too.
Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."
1:21 PM - 15 Oct 2017
24,725 Retweets
53, 346 Likes

ment is thus an enduring, institutionalized form of collective action aimed at changing or resisting change to the social, political, and/or economic order.

As you'll learn later, some other recent instances of collective action that spread quickly via social media failed to bureaucratize. They withered and had relatively little social impact. But #MeToo fits the conventional definition of a social movement. It has brought together a large number of people seeking social change. It has a website, a staff, and a fundraising mechanism. It is active on social media and in the press. It routinely engages with political representatives to influence legislation. In a word, it has become bureaucratized and is likely to endure (Me Too Movement, 2019). It certainly has its work cut out for it: In 2018, just 25 percent of Canadians fully understood what consent to have sex means; half of Canadian women said they have been pressured to consent to unwanted sex; Canadian men between the ages of 18 and 34 were the most likely to believe that sexually suggestive behaviour at work is acceptable; and when asked what they felt during conversations about the pervasiveness of sexual assault, nearly four of ten Canadian men said they felt nothing or were bored (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2019).

Chapter Plan

We have divided this chapter into three sections. First, we examine the social conditions that need to exist for the creation of non-routine collective action. Until the early 1970s, mobs and riots were often viewed as wild and uncoordinated events, more like stampedes of frightened cattle than structured social processes. In addition, the people engaging in non-routine collective action were thought to have lost their individuality and capacity for reason. As you will learn, sociologists now believe this portrayal is an exaggeration that deflects attention from the social organization and inner logic of such extraordinary sociological events.

Second, we outline the conditions underlying the formation of social movements. To achieve their aims, social movement members may petition, strike, demonstrate, and establish pressure groups, unions, and political parties. We will see that a set of distinctively sociological issues are required to formulate an adequate explanation of institutionalized protest. These issues involve the distribution of power in society and the framing of political issues in ways that appeal to many people.

Finally, we make some observations about the historical context of social movements. We will see that the history of social movements is the history of underprivileged groups attempting to expand their members' citizenship rights and increase the range of protest from the local to the national to the global level—and resistance to such action.

We begin by considering the riot, a well-studied form of non-routine collective action.

Non-routine Collective Action

The Vancouver Riot of 1907

Just after 9 p.m. on September 7, 1907, following a rousing chorus of "Rule Britannia," A.E. Fowler rose to address a crowd of several thousand people outside Vancouver City Hall. Fowler was secretary of the Seattle branch of the Asiatic Exclusion League, an organization of White trade unionists who were trying to convince the American and Canadian governments to keep Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, and Sikhs out of North America. Fowler was a fanatic. He had been discharged from the US Army for "unfitness by character and temperament" (quoted in Wynne, 1996). According to rumour, he had spent time in the Washington State Asylum at Steilacoom. He certainly knew how to whip up a crowd's emotions. Just two days earlier, he had participated in an anti-Asian riot in Bellingham, Washington,

Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library, Photo XXXVI-17

Aftermath of the Vancouver riot, 1907

80 kilometres southeast of Vancouver. He described how 500 White men had invaded the lodgings of more than 1100 Sikh and Hindu mill workers under cover of night, dragged them half-naked from their beds, and beat them. Six of the victims were in hospital. Four hundred were in jail, guarded by police. Seven hundred and fifty had been driven across the US–Canada border.

The Vancouver crowd liked what it heard. They cheered Fowler's impassioned description of the Bellingham violence as they waved little flags inscribed "A white Canada for us." According to one source, Fowler "whipped the crowd into a frenzy" by calling for a "straight-from-the-shoulder blow" against Asian immigration (Chinese Community, 2001). Suddenly, someone threw a stone. It shattered a window in a nearby Chinese-owned shop. The crowd, its prejudices having been reinforced and inflamed by Fowler, took the cue. Members of the crowd surged uncontrollably into Vancouver's Chinatown, hurling insults, throwing rocks through windows, and beating and occasionally stabbing Chinese people who were unable to flee or hide. With Chinatown reduced to a mass of broken glass, the crowd then moved on to the Japanese quarter, a few blocks away. The rioting continued for about three hours.

The next morning's papers in Toronto, Manchester, and London agreed on the main reason for the riot. The Toronto *Globe* said the riot was caused by "a gang of men from Bellingham." The *Manchester Guardian* said it had "proof of the correctness of the theory . . . that the anti-Japanese rioting in Vancouver was due to American agitators" (quoted in Wynne, 1996). In short, according to the papers, the riot resulted less from local social conditions than from the incitement of foreign hoodlums, the half-crazed Fowler foremost among them. Surely, the newspapers suggested, good White Canadian citizens could not be responsible for such an outrage.

Breakdown Theory: A Functionalist Approach to Collective Action

Breakdown theory suggests that social movements emerge when traditional norms and patterns of social organization are disrupted.

Until about 1970, most sociologists believed that non-routine collective action resulted from at least one of three conditions, all exemplified by the 1907 Vancouver riot. First, a group's leaders and followers must be socially marginal or poorly integrated in society. Second, their norms must be strained or disrupted. Finally, they must lose their ability to act rationally because of being caught up in the apparently intrinsic madness of crowds. According to Charles Tilly and his associates, these three factors together form the **breakdown theory** of collective action. All three factors assume that the disruption or breakdown of traditional norms, expectations, and patterns of behaviour results in collective action (Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly, 1975: 4–6). At a more abstract level, breakdown theory may be considered a variant of functionalism, since it views collective action as a form of social imbalance that results from the improper functioning of various institutions (Chapter 1, A Sociological Compass). Specifically, most pre-1970 sociologists would have said that the Vancouver riot was caused by one or more of the following factors:

1. *The discontent of socially marginal people.* This factor was emphasized by the Ontario and British newspapers when they singled out "foreign agitators" as the main cause of the disturbance. According to the papers, the Vancouver rioters were galvanized by people from outside the community who had little in common with the solid citizens of Vancouver and who were skilled in whipping crowds into a frenzy and getting them to act in extraordinary and violent ways. Breakdown theorists often single out such socially marginal, outside agitators as a principal cause of riots and other forms of collective action.

Sometimes, however, breakdown theorists focus on the social marginality of those who are led. Often, they say, a large number of the ordinary people who participate in riots, mobs, lynchings, and the like are poorly integrated in society. For example, they may be recent migrants to the area, that is, people who are unsettled and unfamiliar with the peaceable norms and conventions of the community. Pre-1970 sociologists could have made a case for the presence of many such people in Vancouver. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway more than two decades earlier and the ongoing construction of other railways had stimulated rapid economic growth and urbanization in British Columbia. Construction, mining, and lumbering were all boom industries. It is possible (although it has not been demonstrated empirically) that a large proportion of the rioters in 1907 were poorly integrated newcomers.

2. *The violation of norms* (sometimes called **strain**) is the second factor that pre-1970 sociologists would have stressed in trying to account for the 1907 Vancouver riot (Smelser, 1963: 47–48, 75). Arguably, two norms were violated in Vancouver, one cultural, the other economic. With rapid economic growth stimulating demand for labour, the number of Asian immigrants in British Columbia grew quickly in the early part of the twentieth century. By 1907, one-quarter of male workers in the province were of Asian origin. Their languages, styles of dress, religions, foods—in short, their entire way of life—offended many residents, who were of British origin. They regarded the Asian immigrants as "a threat to their cultural integrity" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000). From their point of view, Asian Canadian cultural practices were violations of fundamental Anglo-Canadian norms.

Strain is the breakdown in traditional norms that supposedly precedes collective action.

A second source of strain may have been the result of rapid economic growth causing British Columbians' material expectations to grow out of line with reality. According to proponents of breakdown theory, grinding poverty, or **absolute deprivation**, does not normally generate riots and other forms of collective action; instead, collective action is the result of **relative deprivation** (see Figure 18.1). People feel relatively deprived when they experience an intolerable gap between the social rewards they think they deserve and the social rewards they expect to receive. Social rewards are widely valued goods, including money, education, security, prestige, and so on. Accordingly, people are most likely to rebel against authority when rising expectations (brought on by, say, rapid economic growth and migration) are met by a sudden decline in social rewards (caused by, say, economic recession or war; Davies, 1969; Gurr, 1970). Neither recession nor war affected Vancouver in 1907. But in that era of heady economic expansion, economic expectations may have risen beyond what society was able to provide. Hence the mounting frustration of Vancouver's workers that left them open to the influence of men like Fowler.

Absolute deprivation is a condition of extreme poverty.

Relative deprivation is an intolerable gap between the social rewards people feel they deserve and the social rewards they expect to receive.

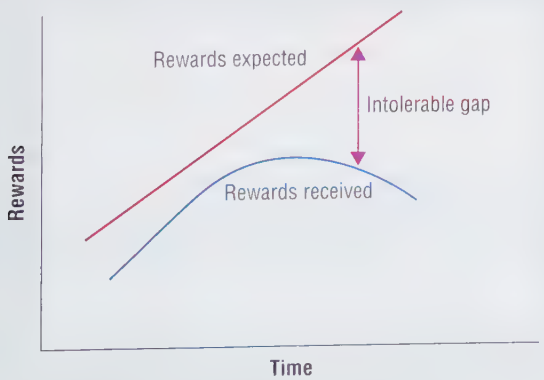


FIGURE 18.1

Relative Deprivation Theory. People feel relatively deprived when they experience an intolerable gap between the social rewards they think they deserve and the social rewards they expect to receive.

Source: From BRYM/LIE. Sociology, 1E. © 2009 Nelson Education Ltd. Reproduced by permission. www.cengage.com/permissions

3. *The inherent irrationality of crowd behaviour* is the third factor likely to be stressed in any pre-1970 explanation of the Vancouver riot. Gustave Le Bon, a French sociologist who studied crowd behaviour, wrote that although an isolated person might be a cultivated individual, in a crowd the individual is transformed into a "barbarian," a "creature acting by instinct" possessing the "spontaneity, violence," and "ferocity" of "primitive beings" (Le Bon, 1969 [1895]: 28). According to Le Bon, this transformation takes place as a result of people losing their individuality and willpower when they join a crowd while simultaneously gaining a sense of invincible group power that stems from the crowd's size. Under these circumstances, a feeling of invincibility allows crowd members to succumb to instincts they would normally hold in check. Furthermore, if people remain in a crowd long enough, they enter a kind of hypnotic state, leaving them open to the suggestions of manipulative leaders. Extreme passions then spread through the crowd like a contagious disease, leading sociologists to name Le Bon's argument the **contagion** theory of crowd behaviour. For all of these reasons, Le Bon argued, people in crowds often perform extraordinary and sometimes outrageous acts. This characterization certainly describes the actions of some of Vancouver's citizens in 1907.

Contagion is the process by which extreme passions supposedly spread rapidly through a crowd like a contagious disease.

Assessing Breakdown Theory

Can social marginality, contagion, and strain fully explain what happened in Vancouver in 1907? Can breakdown theory provide a satisfactory explanation for collective action in general? The short answer is no. Beginning in 1970, sociologists have uncovered faults in all three elements of breakdown theory and have proposed alternative frameworks for understanding collective action. To help you appreciate the need for these alternative frameworks, let us reconsider the three elements of breakdown theory in the context of the Vancouver riot.

SOCIAL MARGINALITY

Although it is true that Fowler and some of his associates were "outside agitators," the plain fact is that "if there had not been many local people who were deeply concerned about Oriental immigration, no amount of propaganda from the outside would have aroused the crowds" (Wynne, 1996). Moreover, the parade of 7000 to 9000 people who marched to city hall to hear Fowler's incendiary speech was organized locally by pillars of the community: Vancouver trade unionists, ex-servicemen, and clergymen. Their role fits a general pattern. In most cases of collective action, leaders and early joiners tend to be well-integrated members of their communities, not socially marginal outsiders (Brym, 2010b [1980]; Lipset, 1971 [1951]).

CONTAGION

No evidence suggests that the violence of September 7, 1907, was premeditated. But neither were the day's events spontaneous and unorganized acts of "contagion." A Vancouver branch of the Asiatic Exclusion League had been formed more than a month earlier and held three meetings before September 7. Two hundred people attended its third meeting on August 23. They carefully mapped out the route for the parade, ending at city hall. They decided to hire a brass band. They arranged for the manufacture of flags emblazoned with racist slogans. They arranged to mobilize various local organizations to participate in the parade. They decided who would be invited to speak at city hall and what demands would be made of the government. Sophisticated planning went into organizing the day's events.

As the Vancouver example shows, and as much research on riots, crowds, and demonstrations has confirmed, non-routine collective action may be wild and violent, but it is usually socially structured. In the first place, non-routine collective action is socially structured by the predispositions that unite crowd members and pre-date their collective action. Thus, if the Vancouver rioters had not shared racist attitudes, they never would have organized and assembled for the parade and engaged in the riot in the first place (Berk, 1974; Couch, 1968; McPhail, 1991).

Second, non-routine collective action is socially structured by ideas and norms that emerge in the crowd itself, such as the idea to throw rocks through the windows of Chinese- and Japanese-owned shops in Vancouver (Turner and Killian, 1987).

Third, non-routine collective action is structured by the degree to which different types of participants adhere to emergent and pre-existing norms. Leaders, rank-and-file participants, and bystanders adhere to such norms to varying degrees (Zurcher and Snow, 1981).

Fourth, pre-existing social relationships among participants structure non-routine collective action. For instance, relatives, friends, and acquaintances are more likely than strangers are to cluster together and interact in riots, crowds, demonstrations, and lynchings (McPhail, 1991; McPhail and Wohlstein, 1983; Weller and Quarantelli, 1973). Thus, non-routine collective action is socially organized in many ways, none of which are highlighted by focusing on contagion.

STRAIN

Contrary to the argument of many breakdown theorists, a large body of post-1970 research shows that, in general, levels of deprivation, whether absolute or relative, are not commonly associated with the frequency or intensity of outbursts of collective action, either in Canada or elsewhere (McPhail, 1994; Torrance, 1986: 115–45). In other words, although feelings of deprivation are undoubtedly common among people who engage in collective action, they are also common among people who do not engage in collective action.

Deprivation may therefore be viewed as a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for collective action. For example, although Asian immigration upset many Anglo-Canadians in Vancouver, the roots of the 1907 riot ran deeper than the violation of their cultural norms. They were embedded in the way the local labour market was organized. Typically, where low-wage workers of one race and high-wage workers of another race compete for the same jobs, racist attitudes develop or are reinforced because high-wage workers resent the presence of low-wage competitors (Chapter 10, Race and Ethnicity). Conflict almost inevitably results. This situation happened when Black Americans first migrated from the South to northern and western American cities in the early twentieth century. In Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, the split labour market fuelled deep resentment, animosity, and even anti-Black riots on the part of working-class Whites (Bonacich, 1972). Similarly, the 1907 Vancouver riot was ultimately the result of the way social life and, in particular, the labour market were organized in the city and the province.

We conclude that non-routine collective action is a two-sided phenomenon. Breakdown theory alerts us to one side. Collective action is partly a reaction to the violation of norms that threaten to *disorganize* traditional social life. But breakdown theory diverts attention from the other side of the phenomenon. Collective action is also a response to the *organization* of social life. And so we arrive at the starting point of post-1970 theories of collective action and social movements. For half a century, most students of the subject have recognized that collective action is often not a short-term reaction to disorganization and deprivation. Instead, it is a long-term attempt to correct perceived injustice that requires a sound social-organizational basis.

Time for Review

- Breakdown theory attributes non-routine collective action to the discontent of socially marginal people, the violation of core norms (strain), and the inherent irrationality of crowds.
- Research shows that none of these factors correlates with non-routine collective action.

Social Movements

According to breakdown theory, people are more likely to engage in non-routine collective action soon after social breakdown occurs. As a result, events such as rapid urbanization, industrialization, mass migration, unemployment, and war often lead to a buildup of deprivations or the violation of important norms, leading people to take to the streets.

In reality, however, collective action results in the formation of a social movement only when those who experience discontent are able to build up a relatively stable membership and organizational base. After establishing this foundation, they normally move from an exclusive focus on short-lived actions, such as demonstrations and riots, to more enduring and routine activities that require hiring full-time personnel. These types of activities may include establishing an office with a paid staff, founding a newspaper, and running for public office. Creating such a movement bureaucracy takes time, energy, and money, making it unlikely that social breakdown alone will result in the formation of a social movement.

Solidarity Theory: A Conflict Approach

Research conducted since 1970 indicates that social breakdown often does not have the anticipated short-term result because a number of social-structural factors typically alter the effects of social breakdown on collective action. For example, Charles Tilly and his associates studied collective action in France, Italy, and Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Lodhi and Tilly, 1973; Snyder and Tilly, 1972; Tilly, 1979a; Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly, 1975). They systematically read newspapers, government reports, and other sources so they could analyze a representative sample of strikes, demonstrations, and acts of collective violence. (They defined acts of collective violence as events in which groups of people seized or damaged other people or property.) They measured social breakdown by collecting data on rates of urban growth, suicide, major crime, prices, wages, and the value of industrial production. Breakdown theory would be supported if they found that levels of social breakdown rose and fell with rates of collective action. But they did not.

As the top panel of Table 18.1 shows for France, nearly all the correlations between collective violence and indicators of breakdown are close to zero. In other words, acts of collective violence did not increase in the wake of mounting social breakdown, nor did they decrease in periods marked by less breakdown.

Significantly, however, Tilly and his associates found stronger correlations between collective violence and some other variables. You will find them in the bottom panel of Table 18.1. These correlations hint at the three fundamental lessons of the **solidarity theory** of social movements, a variation of conflict theory (Chapter 1, A Sociological Compass) and the dominant approach to the subject in the 1970s and early 1980s:

Solidarity theory suggests that social movements are social organizations that emerge when potential members can mobilize resources, take advantage of new political opportunities, and avoid high levels of social control by authorities.

The first thing we learn from Table 18.1 is that collective violence in France increased when the number of union members rose. It decreased when the number of union members fell. Why? Because union organization gave workers more power, which increased their capacity to pursue their aims—if necessary, by demonstrating, striking, and engaging in collective violence. Most collective action is part of a power struggle, which intensifies as groups whose members feel disadvantaged become more powerful relative to other groups. Disadvantaged groups become more powerful by attracting new members, becoming better organized, and increasing their access to scarce resources, such as money, jobs, and methods of communication (Bierstedt, 1974). French unionization is therefore only one example of **resource mobilization**, a process by which groups engage in more collective action as their power increases because of their growing size and increasing organizational, material, and other resources (Jenkins, 1983; Zald and McCarthy, 1979).

Resource mobilization refers to the process by which social movements crystallize because of the increasing organizational, material, and other resources of movement members.

Second, Table 18.1 shows that more collective violence occurred in France when national elections were held. Again, why? Because elections gave people new political

TABLE 18.1

Correlates of Collective Violence, France, 1830–1960

	Correlation with Frequency of Collective Violence
Breakdown Variables	
Number of suicides	0.00
Number of major crimes	–0.16
Deprivation Variables	
Manufactured goods prices	0.05
Food prices	0.08
Value of industrial production	0.10
Real wages	0.03
Organizational Variable	
Number of union members	0.40
Political Process Variable	
National elections	0.17
State Repression Variable	
Days in jail	–0.22

Notes: Correlations can range from –1.0 (indicating a perfect, inversely proportional relationship) to 1.0 (indicating a perfect, directly proportional relationship). A correlation of zero indicates no relationship. The correlation between the major crime and the rate of collective violence is negative, but it should be positive according to breakdown theory. The years covered by each correlation vary.

Source: Adapted from Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly (1975: 81–82)

opportunities to protest. Election campaigns often serve as invitations to engage in collective action by providing a focus for discontent and a chance to put new representatives with new policies in positions of authority. Opportunities for protest also arise when powerful allies offer support, when ruling political alliances become unstable, and when elite groups are divided and come into conflict with one another (Tarrow, 2011). In other words, collective action occurs and social movements crystallize not only when disadvantaged groups become more powerful, but also when advantaged groups and the institutions they control are divided and therefore become weaker. As economist John Kenneth Galbraith once said about the weakness of the Russian ruling class at the time of the 1917 revolution, if someone kicks in a rotten door, some credit has to be given to the door. In short, this important aspect of solidarity theory connects the timing of collective action and the formation of social movements to the emergence of new **political opportunities** (McAdam, 1982; Piven and Cloward, 1977; Tarrow, 2011).

Political opportunities for collective action and social movement growth occur most frequently during election campaigns, when influential allies offer support to insurgents, when ruling political alignments become unstable, and when elite groups become divided and conflict with one another.

Finally, the third thing we can learn from Table 18.1 is that government responses to protest influence subsequent protest. Specifically, governments can take various **social control** measures, such as making concessions to protesters, co-opting the most troublesome leaders, and violently repressing collective action in an effort to lower the frequency and intensity of protest (Oberschall, 1973: 242–83; see Box 18.1). The last point explains the modest correlation in Table 18.1 between frequency of collective violence and governments throwing more people into jail for longer periods. In France, more violent protest often resulted in more state repression. However, the correlation is modest because social control measures do not always have the desired effect. For instance, if grievances are very deeply felt, and yielding to protesters' demands greatly increases their hopes, resources, and political opportunities, government concessions may encourage protesters to press their claims further. And although the firm and decisive use of force usually stops protest, using force moderately or inconsistently often backfires. That is because unrest typically intensifies when protesters are led to believe

Social control refers to methods of ensuring conformity, for example, the means by which authorities seek to contain collective action through co-optation, concessions, and coercion.

BOX 18.1 Social Policy

CONTROLLING PROTEST DIGITALLY

As you will learn later in this chapter, social media have changed the face of much social protest. Social media make it easier to spread ideas critical of corporations and governments, mobilize activists, and coordinate protest. At the same time, social media have made it easier for authorities to control and quash dissent, particularly in Egypt, Iran, China, Russia, and Venezuela.

Mechanisms of digital control include shutting down access to social media; drastically slowing uploads and downloads; monitoring activists; arresting citizens based on their cellphone conversations, shared photos, and social media posts; seizing and searching electronic devices; and setting loose trolls to reframe online discussions in favour of the regime. These methods are used mainly when regimes perceive danger: when activists call for protest, when elections are about to be held, and so on. Digital security experts have developed workarounds, including strongly encrypted messaging apps like Signal, Wire, and Telegram. However, in Egypt and elsewhere, the regime and its allies manage to block access to these apps pretty much at will. As of October 2019, more than 500 websites were blocked in Egypt, up from 27 in May 2017 (Craig, 2016; Shea, 2019).

If you think Canada is immune to attempts to control protest by digital means, you are mistaken. The RCMP created Project Wide Awake to help investigators solve crimes. They then expanded the project to assess which people might commit crimes. Its technology allows the RCMP to search hundreds of millions of blogs, Facebook posts, and other online sources for keywords. It may be difficult to imagine the RCMP searching for keywords like "pipeline protest" to prevent anti-pipeline demonstrations from taking place. However, its Project SITKA, launched in 2014 and discovered by means of a freedom of information request, investigated 300 Indigenous activists, suggesting that digital control of protest activity may already be taking place in this country (Willcocks, 2019).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why is digital control of protest more widespread in some countries than in others?
2. To what degree does a democracy depend on the right of its citizens to privacy?

that the government is weak or indecisive (Piven and Cloward, 1977: 27–36; Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly, 1975: 244).

Before 1970, analyses of collective action and social movements focused on discussions of strain, deprivation, and contagion. After 1970, analyses focused on resource mobilization, political opportunities, and social control. Let us now concretize the new ideas by analyzing the ups and downs of one of the most important social movements in twentieth-century Canada, the union movement, and its major weapon, the strike.

Strikes and the Union Movement in Canada

You can better appreciate the significance of solidarity theory by considering patterns of strike activity in Canada. When blue-collar and white-collar workers go on strike, they withhold their labour to extract concessions from employers or governments in the form of higher wages and improved social welfare benefits. How do resource mobilization, political opportunity, and social control influence the willingness of workers to challenge the authority of employers and governments in this way?

Resource Mobilization

Consider first the effect of resource mobilization on the frequency of strikes. Research shows that in Canada between the mid-1940s and the mid-1970s, strike activity was high when (1) unemployment was low, (2) union membership was high, and (3) governments were generous in their provision of social welfare benefits. Low unemployment indicates a strong economy. Workers are inclined to strike when business activity is robust because they know employers and governments can afford to make concessions. (During economic booms, employers make bigger profits and governments collect more taxes.) A high level

of unionization is conducive to more strike activity because unions provide workers with leadership, strike funds, and coordination. Thus, as resource mobilization principles suggest, strong social ties among workers (as indicated by a high level of unionization) and access to jobs and money (as indicated by a booming economy) increase challenges to authority (as indicated by strikes).

Figure 18.2 shows the pattern of strike activity in Canada between the end of World War II and 2018. The observed trend adds substance to the resource mobilization approach. Until 1974, the trend in strike activity was upward. In fact, in the early 1970s, Canada and Italy were the most strike-prone countries in the world. This decade was a period of growing prosperity, low unemployment, expanding state benefits, and increasing unionization. Armed with greater access to organizational and material resources, workers challenged authority increasingly more often in the three decades after World War II.

In 1973, however, economic crisis struck. Because of war and revolution in the Middle East, oil prices tripled, and then tripled again at the end of the decade. Inflation increased and unemployment rose. Soon, the government was strapped for funds and needed to borrow heavily to maintain health, education, and welfare programs. Eventually, the debt burden was so heavy the government felt obliged to make deep program cuts. At the same time, federal, provincial, and territorial governments introduced laws and regulations limiting the right of some workers to strike and limiting the wage gains that workers could demand. Unionization reached a peak in 1978, stabilized, and then began to decline. In 2018, 30.1 percent of non-agricultural workers were unionized in Canada—75.1 percent of those in the public sector and just 15.9 percent of those in the private sector (Statistics Canada, 2019h).

Strike action was made even more difficult when Canada signed the free trade deal with the United States and Mexico in 1994. In the face of protracted strikes, many employers could now threaten to relocate to the United States or Mexico. In addition, governments passed laws making it more difficult for many public employees to strike and forcing striking workers back to work. Thus, in the post-1973 climate, the organizational and material resources of workers fell. Consequently, strike activity plummeted. In 1974, 14.7 strikes took place for every 100 000 Canadian non-agricultural workers. By 2018, that number had fallen 97 percent to less than 0.4.

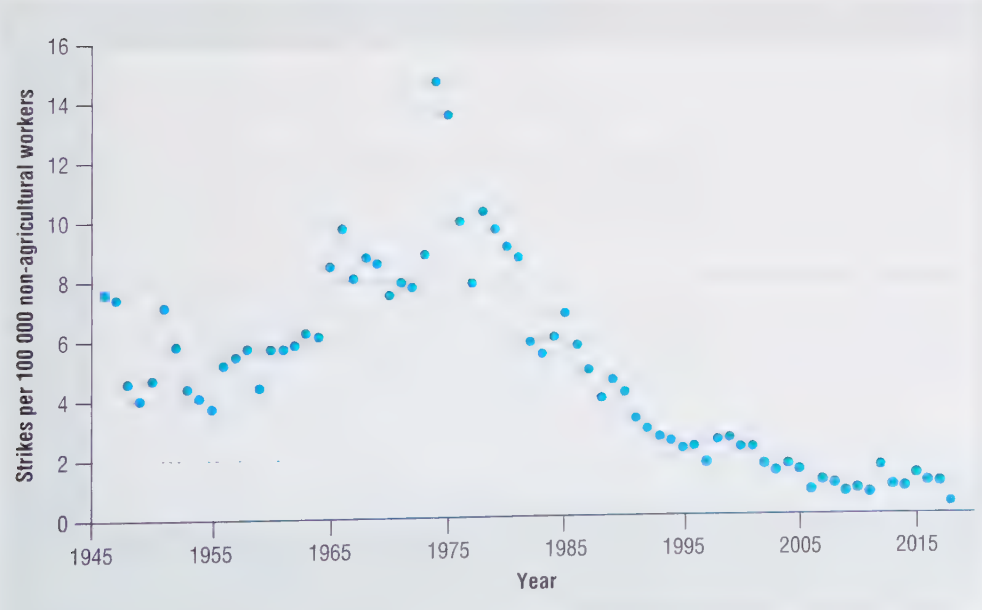


FIGURE 18.2
Weighted Frequency of Strikes, Canada, 1946–2018

Sources: Statistics Canada (2018g, 2019g); Meltz (1976); Denton (1976a, 1976b, 1976c); Government of Canada (2019c)

Political Opportunities

Comparing Canada with the United States allows us to highlight the effect of *political opportunities* on the health of the union movement. These two cases illustrate that opportunities for union growth are greater when privileged groups and the institutions they control are divided and therefore become weaker. Opportunities for union growth are fewer when privileged groups are socially cohesive and are backed by strong institutions.

The United States and Canada have broadly similar industrial and occupational structures. As two of the world's largest trading partners, and linked by a free trade agreement, they are subject to many of the same economic forces. Yet trends in **union density** (the percentage of the non-agricultural labour force that is unionized) started to diverge in the mid-1960s. In 2018, 10.5 percent of non-agricultural employees in the United States were members of a union while the figure in Canada was 30.1 percent. Why the divergence?

Union density is the number of union members in a given location as a percentage of non-agricultural workers. It measures the organizational power of unions.

John F. Kennedy won the closely contested US presidential election in 1960 partly because of the union movement's support. Because of his victory, government employees were awarded the right to unionize in 1961. However, their rights were sharply restricted. They were not allowed to strike, bargain collectively over wages and benefits, or make union membership compulsory. Therefore, public-sector unions did not become an effective or popular means for furthering employee interests.

The situation differed in Canada. A new pro-labour political party, the New Democratic Party (NDP), was established in Canada in 1961 with the support of the union movement. The NDP gained enough popularity among voters to be able to exert considerable influence over government policy. In fact, in the mid-1960s, the ruling Liberal Party would have lost office without NDP support. The NDP used its political leverage to convince the government to extend full union rights to public-sector workers, including the right to strike and bargain collectively. Government employees soon joined unions in droves—and to a considerably greater extent than in the United States. Moreover, partly as a result of NDP influence, restrictions on private-sector unionization were eased. Thus, in Canada, union density increased after the mid-1960s because political forces made unions attractive vehicles for furthering workers' interests.

Why, then, has the union movement been more successful in Canada than in the United States since the 1960s? In the United States, a unified political establishment was able to prevent the union movement from gaining rights that would have made it attractive to more workers. Meanwhile, in Canada, a more divided political establishment could not prevent the creation of a legal environment that was favourable to union growth. In both cases, we see how political opportunities affect the growth or decline of social movements.

Social Control

Finally, we turn to the most disruptive and violent strike in Canadian history—the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919—because it illustrates well three features of the use of *social control* on social movements:

1. *If authorities show indecision or weakness, movement partisans often become bolder.* In April 1918, three unions of Winnipeg city employees walked off the job, demanding higher wages. A month later, the strikers and their employers had nearly hammered out a settlement. Just before signing off on the deal, however, the Winnipeg city council added a clause demanding that city workers pledge never to go on strike again. In angry reaction, nearly all city employees walked off the job. The same day, the city council capitulated. The striking workers got almost everything they demanded. After many bitter defeats, this victory convinced Winnipeg's workers they could get what they wanted by participating in a general strike, that is, a strike in which all employees walk off the job. The city council's capitulation emboldened the workers (Bercuson, 1974: 7).
2. The second thing the Winnipeg strike teaches us about the use of social control on social movements is that *violence, especially the most extreme forms of violence, is most often initiated by authorities, not movement partisans.* On May 15, 1919, negotiations broke down over demands from workers in the building and metal trades for union recognition

and higher wages. They called a general strike. The next morning, the city was paralyzed. Nearly all workers walked off the job. The strike leaders made every effort to keep the streets peaceful. The police, who supported the strike, even agreed to continue working to help maintain law and order.

However, the city council was opposed to having pro-strike police officers on duty. Consequently, they fired the entire police force, replacing it with a large group of untrained "special police" who were hostile to the strike. The special police celebrated their first day of service by riding their horses and swinging their batons into a crowd listening to a speech downtown. That was the first act of violence during the Winnipeg General Strike, but it was by no means the last. In addition to the special police, a mobile military force of 800 men armed with rifles and machine guns was recruited and trained to deal with the strikers. On the afternoon of Saturday, June 21, that is just what they did. Striking workers had been gathering downtown to hold a parade in defiance of a ban issued by the mayor. They spotted a streetcar driven by a scab (replacement worker), cut the electricity powering it, smashed its windows, slashed its seats, and set the interior on fire.

National Archives of Canada/PA163001

The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was the most disruptive and violent strike in Canadian history.

Fifty-four Royal North-West Mounted Police on horses and 36 more in trucks were dispatched to break up the crowd. They charged twice. The crowd responded by throwing rocks and bottles. The Mounties then opened fire on the crowd and continued firing for several minutes. One worker was killed and many more were wounded. There is no evidence that workers fired any shots (Bercuson, 1974: 27). As is usually the case when we compare the violence exercised by authorities with the violence exercised by movement partisans, the authorities came out on top (Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly, 1975).

3. Finally, the Winnipeg strike teaches us that *violent repression can overcome discontent, at least for a time*. That was certainly the case in Winnipeg. Four days after "Bloody Saturday," as June 21 came to be known, the Strike Committee called off the walkout, the strikers having failed to achieve any of their objectives. It took another quarter-century of strikes, many of them bitterly fought, before a larger and more powerful Canadian working class achieved the main demand of the Winnipeg General Strike and won the legal right to form unions.

Time for Review

- Solidarity theory focuses on how social movement formation is influenced by shifts in the balance of power between disadvantaged and privileged groups, the opening and closing of political opportunities, and the exercise of social control by authorities.

Framing Discontent: A Symbolic Interactionist Approach

As you have seen, resource mobilization theory is a useful approach to the study of social movements. Even so, the emergence of a social movement sometimes takes sociologists by surprise. In addition, the failure of an aggrieved group to press its claim is sometimes equally unexpected. And movements that do emerge are successful to varying degrees. It seems, therefore, that something lies between (a) the capacity of disadvantaged people to mobilize resources for collective action and (b) the recruitment of a substantial number of movement members. Sociologists call that "something" **frame alignment** (Benford, 1997; Carroll and Ratner, 1996a, 1996b; Goffman, 1974; Snow et al., 1986; Valocchi, 1996). Frame alignment is the process by which individual interests, beliefs, and values either become congruent and complementary with the activities, ideas, and goals of the movement or fail to do so. Thanks to the efforts of scholars operating mainly in the symbolic interactionist tradition (see Chapter 1, A Sociological Compass), frame alignment has become the subject of sustained sociological investigation.

Frame alignment is the process by which individual interests, beliefs, and values become congruent and complementary with the activities, goals, and ideology of a social movement.

Frame alignment can be encouraged in several ways. For example:

- Social movement leaders can reach out to other organizations that, they believe, contain people who may be sympathetic to the social movement's cause. For example, an anti-nuclear movement may use the mass media, telephone campaigns, and direct mail to appeal to feminist, antiracist, and environmental organizations on the assumption that they are likely to have members who would agree at least in general terms with the anti-nuclear platform.
- Movement activists can idealize values that have so far not featured prominently in the thinking of potential recruits. They can also elevate the importance of positive beliefs about the movement and what it stands for. For example, in trying to win new recruits, movement members might emphasize the seriousness of the social movement's purpose. They might analyze the causes of the problem the movement is trying to solve in a clear and convincing manner. Or they might stress the likelihood of the movement's success. By doing so, they might increase the movement's appeal to potential recruits and win them over to the cause.
- Social movements can also stretch their objectives and activities to win recruits who are not initially sympathetic to the movement's original aims. This may involve a "watering down" of the movement's ideals. Alternatively, movement leaders may decide to take action calculated to appeal to non-sympathizers on grounds that have little or nothing to do with the movement's purpose. When rock, punk, or reggae bands play at nuclear disarmament rallies or gay liberation festivals, it is not necessarily because the music is relevant to the movement's goals. Nor do bands play just because movement members want to be entertained. The purpose is also to attract non-members. Once attracted by the music, non-members may make friends and acquaintances in the movement and then be encouraged to attend a more serious-minded meeting.

It is clear that social movements can employ various strategies to make their ideas more attractive to a larger number of people. However, movements must also acknowledge that their opponents regularly seek to do just the opposite. That is, although movements strive to align their goals, ideas, and activities with the way potential recruits frame issues, their adversaries seek to *disalign* the way movements and potential recruits frame the issues.

The B.C. Ancient Forest Alliance provides a good illustration of this process (Doyle, Elliott, and Tindall, 1997). Launched in British Columbia in 1991, the B.C. Ancient Forest Alliance was created and bankrolled by a group of senior forest industry executives and guided by the world's largest public relations firm. Its goal was to counter the province's

environmental movement. It did so in two main ways. First, in its TV and print ads, the alliance claimed it represented the "middle ground" in the debate between forest companies and environmentalists. In practice, the alliance rarely criticized forest companies while it routinely characterized environmentalists as dope-smoking hippies with untenable ideas, such as shutting down the entire forest industry. Actually, very few environmentalists hold such extreme opinions, and research shows that the middle class in British Columbia broadly supports environmental groups. The second way the alliance sought to counter the environmental movement was by arguing that more environmentalism means fewer jobs. This claim was a huge oversimplification. Job losses in the forest industry were also caused by the introduction of new technologies in some areas, aging equipment in others, Indigenous people's land claims, and resource depletion through overharvesting and inadequate reforestation.

Muddying the waters in this way is typical of social movement opponents. Frame alignment should therefore be viewed as a conflict-ridden process in which social movement partisans and their opponents use the resources at their disposal to compete for potential recruits and sympathizers.

Frame alignment theory stresses the interaction strategies employed by movement members to recruit non-members who are like-minded, apathetic, or even initially opposed to the movement's goals. Resource mobilization theory focuses on the broad social structural conditions that facilitate the emergence of social movements. One theory usefully supplements the other.

We can briefly summarize what we have learned about the causes of collective action and social movement formation with the aid of Figure 18.3.

Time for Review

- Frame alignment theory analyzes the process by which individual interests, beliefs, and values become congruent and complementary with the activities, goals, and ideology of a social movement or fail to do so, thereby facilitating or preventing the formation of social movements.

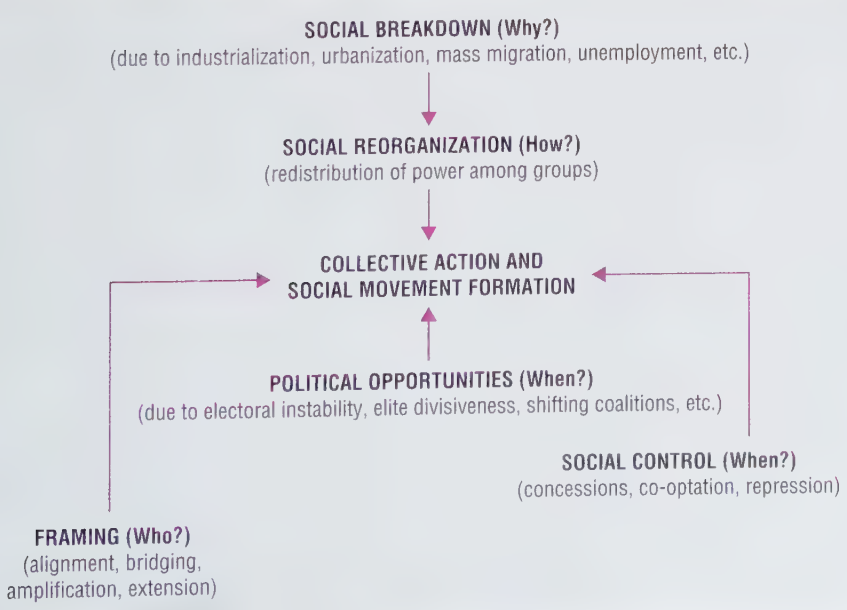


FIGURE 18.3
Determinants of Collective Action and Social Movement Formation

The History and Future of Social Movements

The Past 300 Years

In 1700, social movements were typically small, localized, and violent. In Europe, poor residents of a city might riot against public officials in reaction to a rise in bread prices or taxes. Peasants on an estate might burn their landowner's barns (or their landowner) in response to his demand for a larger share of the crop. However, as the state grew, **repertories of contention** changed. Repertoires of contention involve what people know how to do when they protest, what others expect them to do when they protest, and the actual form of protest they engage in (Tarrow, 2011: 29–30, 39, 55–56; Tilly, 1995). Repertoires of contention are historically specific forms of protest that include everything from food riots and banditry 300 years ago, to demonstrations and strikes in the modern era, to online petitions and "hacktivism" in the digital age (Earl and Kimport, 2011: 16).

Repertories of contention are historically specific forms of protest that include what people know how to do when they protest, what others expect them to do when they protest, and the actual form of protest they engage in.

In the 1700s, states in Europe started taxing nearly all of their citizens at higher and higher rates as government services expanded. Each state imposed a uniform language and a common curriculum in a compulsory education system. It drafted most young men for army service. It instilled in its citizens all the ideological trappings of modern nationalism, from anthems to flags to historical myths. As the state came to encompass most aspects of life, social movements changed in three ways.

First, they became national in scope. That is, they typically directed themselves against central governments rather than local targets. Second, their membership grew. Growth was helped in part because many potential recruits were now literate and could communicate by using the printed word. In addition, large new social settings—factories, offices, densely populated urban neighbourhoods—could serve as recruitment bases. Third, social movements became less violent. That is, their size and organization often allowed them to bureaucratize, stabilize, and become sufficiently powerful to often get their way without frequently resorting to extreme measures. Repertoires of contention now included strikes, demonstrations, petitioning, and sit-ins (Tilly, 1978, 1979a, 1979b; Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly, 1975).

Social movements often used their power to expand the rights of citizens. We can identify four stages in this process, focusing on Britain and the United States. In eighteenth-century Britain, rich property owners fought against the king for the right to **civil citizenship**. Civil citizenship is the right to free speech, freedom of religion, and justice before the law. In the nineteenth century, the male middle class and the more prosperous strata of the working class fought against rich property owners for the right to **political citizenship**. Political citizenship is the right to vote and run for office. In early twentieth-century Britain, women and poorer workers succeeded in achieving these same rights despite the opposition of many well-to-do men in particular. During the remainder of the century, blue-collar and white-collar workers fought against the well-to-do for the right to **social citizenship**. Social citizenship is the right to enjoy a certain level of economic security and full participation in social life with the help of the modern welfare state (Marshall, 1965).

Civil citizenship recognizes the right to free speech, freedom of religion, and justice before the law.

Political citizenship recognizes the right to run for office and vote.

Social citizenship recognizes the right to a certain level of economic security and full participation in the social life of the country.

The timing of the struggle for citizenship rights differed in the United States. Universal suffrage for white males was won earlier in the nineteenth century than in Europe. This timing accounts in part for the greater radicalism of the European working class, which engaged in a long and bitter struggle for the right to vote while the American working class was already incorporated into the political system (Lipset, 1977).

Another important distinguishing feature of the United States concerns Black Americans. The 15th Amendment to the Constitution gave them the right to vote in 1870. However, most of them were unable to exercise that right, at least in the South, from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s. That was because of various restrictions on voter registration, including poll taxes and literacy tests. The civil rights movement of the 1960s was in part a struggle over this issue. It helped to create a community that is more politically radical than its White counterpart is.

Bibliotheque Nationale de France

In medieval Europe, social movements were small, localized, and violent. For example, in 1358, a French historian reported "very strange and terrible happenings in several parts of the kingdom. . . . They began when some of the men from the country towns came together in the Beauvais region. They had no leaders and at first they numbered scarcely a hundred. One of them got up and said that the nobility of France . . . were disgracing and betraying the realm, and that it would be a good thing if they were all destroyed. At this they all shouted: 'He's right! He's right! Shame on any man who saves the gentry from being wiped out!' They banded together and went off, without further deliberation and unarmed except for pikes and knives, to the house of a knight who lived nearby. They broke in and killed the knight, with his lady and children, big and small, and set fire to the house" (Froissart, 1968 [c. 1365]: 151).

New Social Movements

So-called **new social movements** emerged in the 1970s (Melucci, 1980, 1995). What is new about new social movements is the breadth of their goals, the kinds of people they attract, their potential for globalization, and the repertories of action they employ. Let us consider each of these issues in turn.

New social movements became prominent in the 1970s. They attract a disproportionately large number of highly educated people in the social, educational, and cultural fields, and universalize the struggle for citizenship.

GOALS

Some new social movements, such as the peace movement, the environmental movement, and the human rights movement, promote the rights not of specific groups but of humanity as a whole, to peace, security, and a clean environment. Other new social movements, such as the women's movement, the gay rights movement, and the Indigenous Peoples movement, promote the rights of particular groups that have been excluded from full social participation.

For instance, gay rights groups have fought for laws that eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation. They have also fought for the repeal of laws that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, such as anti-sodomy laws and laws that negatively affect parental custody of children (Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel, 1999). Since the 1960s, the women's movement has succeeded in getting admission practices altered in professional schools, winning more freedom of reproductive choice for women, and opening up opportunities for women in the political, religious, military, educational, medical, and business systems (Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, 1988). The Idle No More movement emerged in 2011 to promote land claims and environmental protection, among other issues of particular concern to Indigenous peoples in Canada. The Black Lives Matter movement emerged in 2013 in the United States and spread to Canada by 2015. It drew attention to discriminatory practices in the criminal justice system and, in particular, disproportionate police violence against Black people. As these examples illustrate, by aiming to extend citizenship rights to all adult members of society and to society as a whole, new social movements mark the beginning of a fourth stage in the history of social movements—the stage of what can be called **universal citizenship** (Roche, 1995; Turner, 1986: 85–105).

Universal citizenship recognizes the right of marginal groups to full citizenship and the rights of humanity as a whole.

Carlos Osorio/Toronto Star/Getty Images

A Black Lives Matter news conference in Toronto. In 2016, the movement organized marches and vigils in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal, and Halifax to protest anti-Black brutality on the part of police, and the impunity police often enjoy.

MEMBERSHIP

New social movements are also novel in that they attract a disproportionately large number of highly educated, well-to-do people from the social, educational, and cultural fields: teachers, college and university professors, journalists, social workers, artists, actors, writers, and student apprentices to these occupations. Such people are predisposed to participate in new social movements for several reasons. Their higher education exposes them to radical ideas and makes those ideas appealing. They tend to hold jobs outside the business community, which often opposes their values. And they often get personally involved in the problems of their clients and audiences, sometimes even becoming their advocates (Brint, 1984; Rootes, 1995).

Not coincidentally, the explosion of Indigenous activism that Canada has witnessed with the emergence of the Idle No More movement in 2011 is largely the doing of university-educated Indigenous people. There were just a few hundred Indigenous students in Canada's colleges and universities in the 1970s, but they now number around 30 000, two-thirds of them women. They have high expectations about their careers, they are eager to achieve equality with the rest of the country, and they have given a resounding, articulate voice to the aspirations of their community (Friesen, 2013).

GLOBALIZATION POTENTIAL

Finally, new social movements are new in that they have more potential for globalization than did previous social movements.

Until the 1960s, social movements were typically *national* in scope. That is why, for example, the intensity and frequency of urban race riots in the United States in the 1960s did not depend on such local conditions as the degree of Black–White inequality in a given city

Most leaders of the Idle No More movement are university-educated women.

Marcel Petit

(Spilerman, 1970, 1976). Instead, Black Americans came to believe that racial problems were nationwide and capable of solution only by the federal government. Congressional and presidential action (and inaction) on civil rights issues, national TV coverage of race issues, and growing Black consciousness and solidarity helped shape this belief (Myers, 1997; Olzak and Shanahan, 1996; Olzak, Shanahan, and McEneaney, 1996).

Many new social movements that gained force in the 1970s increased the scope of protest beyond the national level. For example, members of the nuclear disarmament and environmental movements viewed federal legislation as a necessary but insufficient solution to the issues that troubled them. Once they recognized that, say, the condition of the Brazilian rainforest affects climatic conditions worldwide, and that the spread of weapons of mass destruction can easily destroy all of humanity, movement activists pressed for international agreements binding all countries to stop environmental destruction and nuclear proliferation. Social movements went global.

ONLINE ACTIVISM

The globalization of social movements was facilitated by the ease with which people in various national movements could travel and communicate with like-minded activists from other countries. In the age of CNN, al Jazeera, inexpensive jet travel, and the Internet, it was not only possible to see the connection between apparently local problems and their global sources but also easier to act both locally and globally (Castells, 2015 [2012); Smith and Wiest, 2012). In the mid- to late 2000s, Facebook, Twitter, and Skype further lowered the ease and cost of publicizing and organizing protest, profoundly changing the face of social movements worldwide.

Sociologists are, however, of two minds about the effects of online activism on new social movements (Baym, 2015a: 106–11.) On the one hand, researchers have demonstrated many instances of clear benefit. In Mexico, journalists and government officials are often afraid to talk about crimes for fear of retribution, so women have taken to tweeting information about crime on the streets where they live and organizing online support for a crackdown. Research in the United States shows that people who use digital media are more likely than others are to vote, pay attention to campaign coverage in the mass media, and engage in other political activities.

On the other hand, analysts note that, particularly in less democratic societies, governments tend to use digital media to identify, surveil, and arrest activists, thus countering many of the benefits that the online world offers to social movements. And even in democratic societies, many people apparently use digital media as a *replacement* for high-risk activism—signing online petitions, contributing a few cents or a dollar to pet causes, clicking "like" buttons, and reading political blogs, but failing to attend demonstrations or engage in strikes. The unflattering term "slacktivists" is sometimes applied to such people. Sociologists are only beginning to sort out these contradictory trends and the social conditions that give rise to them (see Box 18.2).

A JAGGED AND UNPREDICTABLE LINE?

Former American president Barack Obama was fond of quoting Martin Luther King's view that "the arc of history is long but it bends toward justice." It is a comforting thought to people who favour the constant broadening of citizenship rights and the accomplishment of universalistic goals. However, it is also a thought that pays little attention to periods of failure, setback, and regression in the history of social movements.

Ours is such a period. Today, some people feel threatened by new social movements. They think that the women's movement, the gay and lesbian rights movement, the environmental movement, and various movements of racially marginalized people threaten their privileged economic, political, and cultural position. They have reacted to the perceived threat by forming countermovements that seek to turn back the calendar to a time when citizenship rights were less available to marginalized groups.

The rise of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States was fuelled by such a countermovement, opposed to the broadening of citizenship rights to women, Black people,

BOX 18.2 Sociology and the Media

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ARAB SPRING

For more than a decade, social media have enabled new social movements to mobilize large numbers of people quickly and effectively. Nowhere was this more evident than in late 2010, when Mohamed Bouazizi, a 27-year-old Tunisian street vendor, set himself on fire to protest harassment and humiliation by local officials. His action was captured and shared online, and catalyzed an uprising against authoritarian governments, corruption, widespread unemployment, and deep economic inequality across the Arab world. It took little more than a month before the movement overthrew the Tunisian government. It then spread to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. By the end of 2011, the "Arab Spring" had inspired the Occupy movement to protest growing economic inequality around the world; movement members occupied public places in 951 cities in 82 countries.

The rapid diffusion of the demonstrations that began in late 2010 was made possible by activists using Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and text messaging to express outrage, spread news, organize protests, and warn comrades of real-time threats posed by the police and members of the armed forces. Some analysts referred to the democracy movement that swept the Middle East and North Africa as a "Twitter Revolution" or a "Facebook Revolution" because social media apps were used so effectively to bring about regime change, especially in Tunisia and Egypt.

However, survey research among Egyptian activists paints a more subtle picture. While using new electronic communications media was associated with being a demonstrator, other factors were more important in distinguishing demonstrators from mere sympathetic onlookers. Protesters tended to be people with strong grievances over unemployment, poverty, and corruption. They were more available for protest activities than others were because they tended to be unmarried men living in cities. And they tended to have strong, pre-existing ties to various civic associations; they were highly involved in charitable and political work even before the Arab Spring. Statistical analysis of survey data revealed that the use of new electronic communications media was less important than were strong grievances, high availability, and dense social connections in distinguishing demonstrators from sympathetic onlookers (Brym et al., 2014).

The Arab Spring failed to bring democracy, jobs, and equality to the Middle East and North Africa. A military dictatorship ruled Egypt by 2013; protests in Syria, Libya, and Yemen devolved into civil wars that show no signs of coming to an end as of this writing. As researchers tried to figure out why the Arab Spring largely failed, certain deficiencies of movements based on social media became apparent. For one thing, the cost and risk of joining such a movement online is so low that many sympathizers may not be strongly committed to it. Consequently, they may drop out in the face of minimal adversity. It is also significant that movements based on social media don't often develop mechanisms for selecting leaders, defining coherent goals, and formulating a workable plan of action for achieving those goals. Thus, the very factors that allow movements based exclusively or mainly on social media to spread quickly may also facilitate their demise (Brym, 2019).

PATRICK BAZ/AFP/Getty Images

A protester in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, 2011, helping to overthrow the authoritarian regime of President Hosni Mubarak.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why did the Arab Spring turn into the Arab Winter within a couple of years?
2. One of the guiding principles of the Occupy movement was *horizontalism*, the idea that its members should participate equally in decision making and avoid the creation of hierarchical power structures. What effect could this have on a movement's momentum?

Latinos, Muslims, and sexual minorities. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Poland, increasingly popular countermovements threaten to become ruling parties by directing their animus against (mainly Muslim) immigrants. Such a reactionary party already rules Russia. Canada stands apart, although even here Trumpist stirrings are heard (Brym, 2017c).

Observers may be excused if today's countermovements cause them to wonder whether history is less like an arc bending toward justice than a jagged line, the direction of which is a mystery. Today's countermovements may also help activists appreciate that the direction of the bend is a product of an ongoing struggle to which they can contribute.

Time for Review

- Over the past 300 years, the scope of social movements has grown from the local to the national to the global level.
- As the scope of social movements grew, so did demands for civil, political, social, and universal citizenship.

Summary

1. **How accurate is the view that riots and other forms of collective action are irrational and unstructured actions that take place when people are angry and deprived?**
   Deprivation and strain due to rapid social change are generally *not* associated with increased collective action and social movement formation. Mobs, riots, and other forms of collective action may be wild and violent, but social organization and rationality underlie most collective action.

2. **Which aspects of social organization facilitate rebellion against the status quo?**
   People are more inclined to rebel against the status quo when social ties bind them to many other people who feel similarly wronged and when they have the time, money, organization, and other resources needed to protest. In addition, collective action and social movement formation are more likely to occur when political opportunities allow them to occur. Political opportunities emerge during election campaigns, when influential allies offer support, ruling political alignments become unstable, and elite groups are divided. Finally, authorities' attempts to control unrest mainly influence the timing of collective action. Authorities may offer concessions to insurgents, co-opt leaders, and employ coercion.

3. **What is framing?**
   For social movements to grow, members must make the activities, goals, and ideology of the movement congruent with the interests, beliefs, and values of potential new recruits. The process of doing so is known as framing.

4. **How have social movements changed in the past three centuries?**
   In 1700, social movements were typically small, localized, and violent. By the mid-twentieth century, social movements were typically large, national, and less violent. In the late twentieth century, new social movements developed broader goals, recruited more highly educated people, and developed global potential for growth. Because of these changes, the struggle for the acquisition of citizenship rights came to include (1) the right to free speech, religion, and justice before the law (civil citizenship), (2) the right to vote and run for office (political citizenship), (3) the right to a certain level of economic security and full participation in the life of society (social citizenship), and (4) the right of marginal groups to full citizenship and the right of humanity as a whole to peace and security (universal citizenship).

5. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of social movements based largely on social media?**
   Social media lower the cost and the risk of becoming involved in social movements. They make it relatively easy to communicate ideas, plans, and threats quickly to a large audience. On the other hand, social media also make it more likely that movement followers will not be strongly committed to the movement and will therefore lose interest or drop out at the first sign of adversity. Social media often make it difficult to create mechanisms for selecting leaders, defining coherent goals, and formulating a workable plan of action for achieving those goals. Finally, social media enhance the surveillance and social control capabilities of authorities.

19 Technology, Population, and the Environment

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Recognize that, since World War II, people have increasingly questioned whether technological advances are uniformly beneficial to humanity.
- Identify the causes and consequences of human population growth.
- Assess the major threats to the environment.
- Explain how social problems are contested and socially constructed phenomena.
- Evaluate different approaches to solving the environmental crisis.

Technology: Saviour or Frankenstein?

On August 6, 1945, the United States Air Force dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The bomb killed about 200000 Japanese, almost all of them civilians. It hastened the end of World War II, thus making it unnecessary for US troops to suffer heavy losses in a land invasion of Japan.

Scholars interested in the relationship between technology and society recognize that the bombing of Hiroshima divided the twentieth century into two distinct periods. We could call the period before Hiroshima the era of naive optimism. During that time, technology could do no wrong—or so it seemed to most observers. **Technology** was widely defined as the application of scientific principles to the *improvement* of human life. Technology seemed to be driving humanity down a one-way street named progress, picking up speed with every passing year thanks in part to successively more powerful engines: steam, turbine, internal combustion, electric, jet, rocket, and nuclear. Technology produced tangible benefits. Its detailed workings rested on scientific principles that were mysterious to all but those with advanced science degrees. Therefore, most people regarded technologists with reverence and awe, viewing them as forming a sort of priesthood whose objectivity allowed them to stand outside the everyday world and perform near-magical acts.

Technology is the practical application of scientific principles.

After Hiroshima, the blush was off the rose. Pessimism had, in fact, been evident three weeks earlier, when the world's first nuclear bomb exploded at the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range in New Mexico. The bomb was the child of J. Robert Oppenheimer, appointed just 28 months earlier as head of the top-secret Manhattan Project. After recruiting what General Leslie Groves called "the greatest collection of eggheads ever," including three past and seven future Nobel Prize winners, Oppenheimer organized what at the time was the largest and most sophisticated technological project in human history. As an undergraduate at Harvard, Oppenheimer had studied Indian philosophy, among other subjects. On the morning of July 16, 1945, as the flash of intense white light faded and the purplish fireball rose, sucking desert sand and debris into a mushroom cloud more than 12 kilometres high, Oppenheimer quoted from Hindu scripture: "I am become Death, the shatterer of worlds" (quoted in Parshall, 1998).

Hiroshima

The Canadian Press/Everett

Oppenheimer's misgivings continued after the war. Having witnessed the destructive power he had helped unleash, he wanted the United States to set an example to the only other nuclear power at the time, the Soviet Union. He argued that both countries should halt thermonuclear research and refuse to develop a hydrogen bomb. But the governments of the United States and the Soviet Union had other plans. When Secretary of State Dean Acheson brought Oppenheimer to meet President Truman in 1946, Oppenheimer said, "Mr. President, I have blood on my hands." Truman later told Acheson, "Don't bring that fellow around again" (quoted in Parshall, 1998).

Science and technology remain highly valued. Still, a growing number of people have come to share Oppenheimer's doubts about the bomb. In fact, they have extended those doubts to technology in general. Increasingly, people are beginning to think of technology as a monster run amok, a Frankenstein rather than a saviour. Numerous technological disasters add to their misgivings. For example:

1. The largest accidental oil spill in history occurred when *Deepwater Horizon*, an oil rig located in the Gulf of Mexico, malfunctioned and then exploded in 2010. Oil

spewed from the site for months, ravaging marine ecology and sidelining the livelihoods of thousands of coastal residents.

2. In 2011, an earthquake off the coast of Japan caused a 14-metre high tsunami to sweep over the Fukushima nuclear reactor. The flooding knocked out emergency generators, thus preventing coolant from keeping the reactors at a safe temperature. Three nuclear meltdowns ensued. Radiation spewed into the atmosphere and seeped into the ocean. More than 150 000 area residents had to be evacuated. Cleanup will take 30 to 40 years and cost more than 12 trillion yen ($149 billion).
3. In 2017, Boeing proudly introduced the 737 Max 8, a highly fuel-efficient plane. Few officials paid attention when pilots complained they had trouble mastering the new avionics. Then, within a span of five months, two of the planes crashed. There were no survivors. As engineers traced the problem to faulty software that overrode the effort of pilots to stay airborne, Boeing was forced to ground the entire fleet of Max 8 planes indefinitely.

Sociologist Charles Perrow referred to such events as **normal accidents**. The term recognizes that the very complexity of modern technologies ensures they will *inevitably* fail, although in unpredictable ways (Perrow, 1984). For example, a large computer program contains many thousands of conditional statements. They take the form "if $x = y$, do z; if $a = b$, do c." When in use, the program activates many billions of *combinations* of conditional statements. As a result, complex programs are not tested for all possible eventualities. Therefore, when rare combinations of conditions occur, they have unforeseen consequences that are usually minor, occasionally amusing, sometimes expensive, and too often dangerous. You experience normal accidents when your laptop crashes or hangs.

A normal accident occurs inevitably although unpredictably because of the very complexity of modern technologies.

German sociologist Ulrich Beck coined a term that stuck when he said we live in a **risk society**—a society defined by the way risk is produced as a side effect of technology. Certainly, risks to humanity are mounting. Many observers claim that the world houses too many people consuming too many resources and producing more pollution and waste than the planet can handle (Barrett et al., 2020; Weisman, 2013). Some people marvel at the emerging technologies that might address the world's most urgent problems, while others contemplate the ways these technologies could pose unanticipated dangers and usher in an oppressive new world order (see Box 19.1). Most people seem to vacillate between marvel and dread.

A risk society is defined by the way risk is produced as a side effect of technology.

Sociologists emphasize that the risks and rewards of technology are unequally distributed by class, gender, race, and country. Some people benefit more than others do; some people are at greater risk than others are. As you will learn in this chapter, understanding inequality of risk and reward is key to appreciating how some of the biggest problems we face can be mitigated and perhaps even solved. Specifically, we argue that the greater the degree to which risks and rewards are unequally distributed, the more difficult it will be to solve such problems as overpopulation and environmental degradation. We begin by investigating the so-called population explosion and then turn to environmental issues.

Time for Review

- Increasingly since World War II, people have questioned whether technological advances are uniformly beneficial to humanity.
- This questioning has been provoked by the repeated occurrence of "normal accidents," which take place because the complexity of modern technologies ensures they will inevitably fail, although in unpredictable ways.
- Doubts about the benefits of technological advances have prompted sociologists to conduct research on the way risk is produced as a side effect of technology and on the social distribution of such risk.

BOX 19.1 Social Policy

SURVEILLANCE IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

The Spanish flu of 1918–19 infected nearly 500 million people and killed 20 to 50 million of them. Deadly as COVID-19 is, it won't pose the same level of threat as the Spanish flu. We can thank technological advances in the period between the two pandemics for that (Brown, 2020). The technology to identify viruses didn't exist before 1940, meaning scientists during the Spanish flu pandemic only suspected what they were dealing with. In contrast, it took just three months to map out the genome sequence of COVID-19 and launch clinical trials for a vaccine. Most deaths from the Spanish flu were not caused by the virus alone but by secondary infection from bacterial pneumonia (Morens, Taubenberger, and Fauci, 2008). COVID-19 also ruthlessly attacks the lungs, leading to bacterial pneumonia (Readearn, 2020). The difference is that a century ago, patients didn't have access to ventilators, antibiotics, or specialist physicians with expertise in critical care. Today, these technologies give even the sickest patient a fighting chance at recovery.

Consider also the emerging technologies of robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and big data as they are currently being used to dent the spread of COVID-19. Semi-autonomous robots disinfect public spaces, provide health care services across different settings, and deliver groceries or restaurant meals. AI deploys infrared sensors in public spaces to detect the forehead temperature of up to 200 people a minute so as to limit the activity of anyone with a fever (Robitzski, 2020). Machine learning analyzes big data scraped from cellphone GPS data, credit card transaction records, surveillance camera footage, and tracking apps on mobile devices to permit the identification of people who have been in contact with people infected by COVID-19 (de la Garza, 2020).

Undoubtedly, these technologies are beneficial. For example, BlueDot, a Toronto-based AI company, recognized the threat of a cluster of unusual pneumonia cases happening in Wuhan, China, long before health experts knew there was a problem (Bowles, 2020). Its software accurately predicted where the disease was headed next and warned governments so they could prepare. Nonetheless, some people worry about what rights and freedoms might be lost with the widespread use of such technologies (Smith et al., 2020).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Who might be able to use electronic tracing technologies after COVID-19 has been vanquished? For what purposes?
2. Who might find their rights and freedoms restricted by the continued use of electronic tracing technologies?

Population

The Population Explosion

Twelve thousand years ago, there were only about 6 million people in the world. Two thousand years ago, the world population stood at 250 million, and around 1800 it reached 1 billion. Thereafter, population growth skyrocketed. In 2000, there were 6 billion people on the planet. In 2012, there were 7 billion. Another billion will have joined the world's population by 2024.

Figure 19.1 illustrates population growth from 1950 to 2100. Significantly, the rate of population growth is slowing down, meaning that in the future, adding another billion people will not happen as quickly as it is happening now. After the world achieves a population of 8 billion in 2024, approximately 30 years will pass before we reach 9 billion. From this standpoint, the worst of the population explosion is over.

Figure 19.1 also reveals wide variation in population growth across the world's regions. Population growth has peaked in Europe (Willekens, 2015). The populations of Russia, Italy, and Germany are actually shrinking. Asia's population is growing steadily, but its population will peak around 2050 and decline thereafter. China stands out from the rest of Asia. Its population will soon start to drop (Myers, 2019). Consequently, India will soon succeed China as the world's most populous country. Africa is on the verge of tremendous population growth. The population of 28 African countries will likely double between now and 2050. Nigeria is the clear leader. It is growing so quickly that, by 2050,

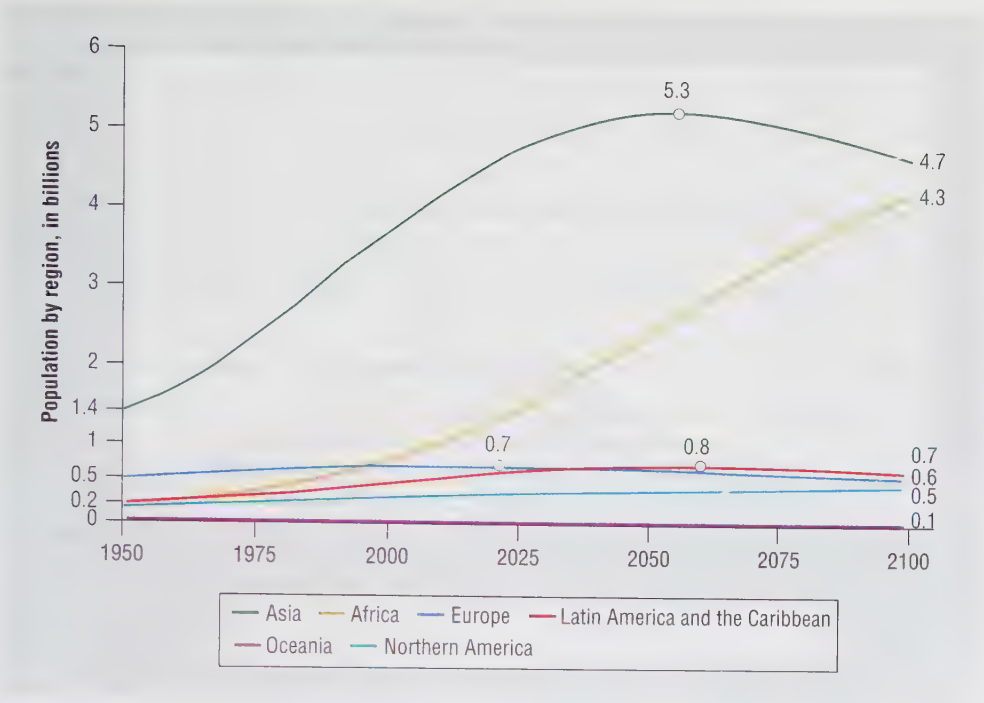


FIGURE 19.1
World Population, by Region, 1950–2100 (in billions, projected)

Note: Data labels show projected peak population for each region: Europe (2021), Asia (2055), and Latin America and the Caribbean (2058). Regions follow United Nations definitions and may differ from other Pew Research Center reports.

Source: Pew Research Center (2019d)

it will be the world's third-most-populous country. Today, a population explosion is taking place only in Africa.

Population analysts, known as **demographers**, think projections about future population growth will quell concern about an impending worldwide population explosion (Livi-Bacci, 2015; see Figure 19.2). However, many people still regard overpopulation as catastrophic, some even predicting the destruction of the human species because the world's resources cannot support more people (Weisman, 2013).

Concern about overpopulation dates at least as far back as the late eighteenth century, when Europe became the first place to witness rapid population growth. In 1798, Thomas Robert Malthus, a British clergyman, proposed a persuasive theory of the population explosion (Malthus, 1966 [1798]). As you will soon discover, sociologists have criticized, qualified, and in part rejected his theory. However, because much of the debate over overpopulation is, in effect, a debate with Malthus's ghost, we must confront his ideas head on.

Demographers are social-scientific analysts of human population.

The Malthusian Trap

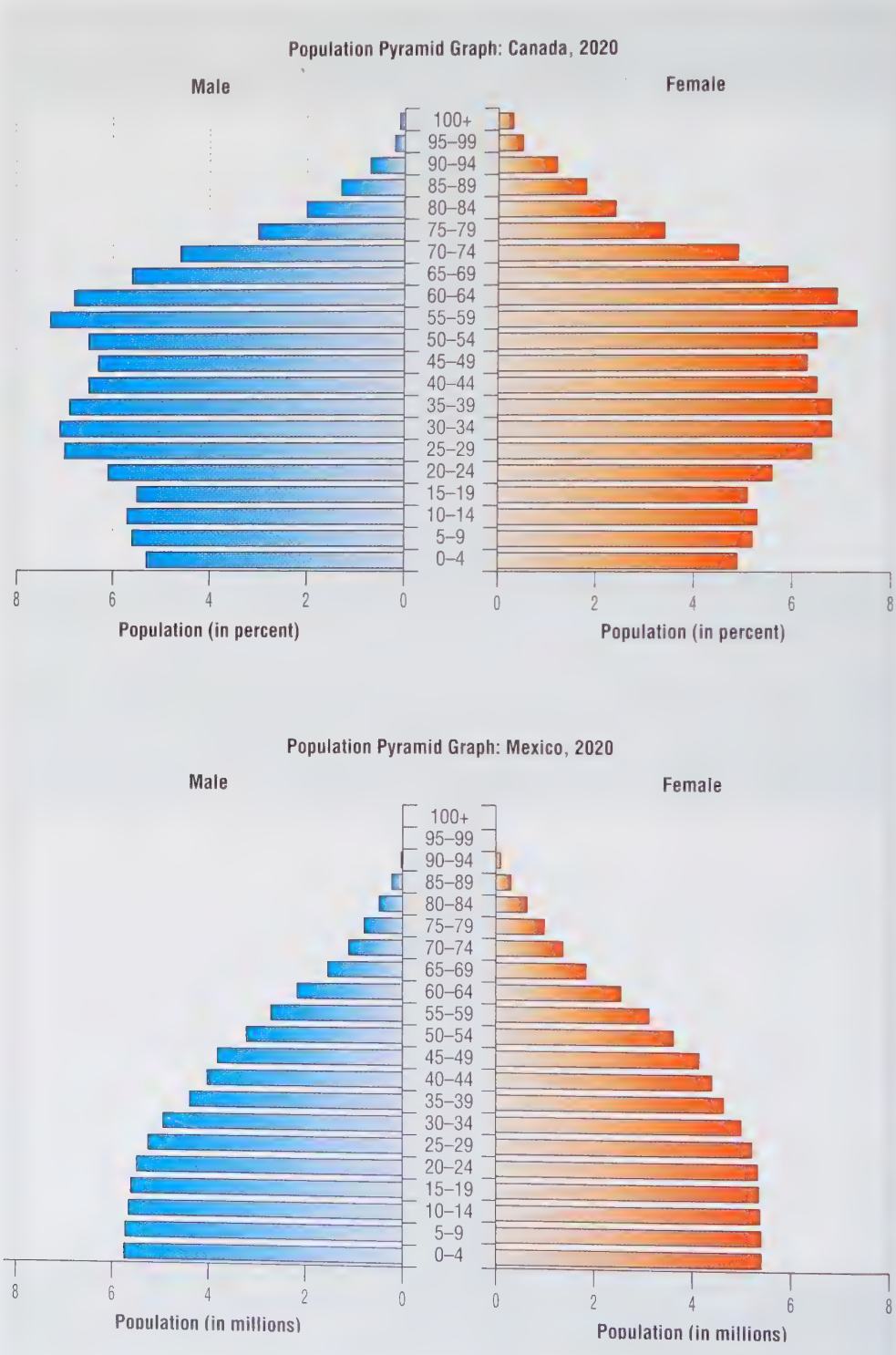
Malthus's theory is based on two irrefutable facts and one problematic assumption. The facts: People must eat, and they are motivated by a strong sexual urge. The assumption: The food supply grows slowly and arithmetically (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) but population size increases quickly and geometrically (1, 2, 4, 8, etc.). On the basis of these ideas, Malthus concluded that "the superior power of population cannot be checked without . . . misery or vice" (Malthus, 1966 [1798]): 217–18).

Specifically, only two types of forces can control population growth: "preventive measures" and "positive checks." Preventive measures include abortion, infanticide,

and prostitution, which Malthus called "vices" because he (and most people of his day) thought everyone should oppose them. Positive checks include war, pestilence, and famine. Malthus acknowledged that positive checks create much suffering. However, he also believed they are the only forces that can be permitted to control population growth. The result is the

FIGURE 19.2

How Demographers Analyze Population Composition and Change. The main purpose of demography is to understand why the size, geographical distribution, and social composition of human populations change over time. The basic equation of population change is $P2 = P1 + B - D + I - E$, where $P2$ is population size at a particular time, $P1$ is population size at an earlier time, B is the number of births in the interval, D is the number of deaths in the interval, I is the number of immigrants arriving in the interval, and E is the number of emigrants leaving in the interval. The "age–sex pyramid" analyzes the composition of a population by showing the number of males and females in each age cohort of the population at a particular time. The age–sex pyramids for Canada and Mexico in 2020 are shown here. Why do you think they look so different? Compare your answer with that provided by the theory of the demographic transition, discussed later in this section.



Source: US Census Bureau (2020)

so-called **Malthusian trap:** a cycle of population growth followed by an outbreak of war, pestilence, or famine that keeps population growth in check. According to Malthus, while population size might fluctuate, it also has a natural upper limit that, in his opinion, Europe had reached.

Although many people supported Malthus's theory, others considered him to be a misguided prophet of doom and gloom (Winch, 1987). Malthus disagreed with efforts to help those living in poverty. He believed that such aid was counterproductive, enabling the poor to buy more food and have more children, which would, in turn, make them poorer still. His advice? Reduce the sum of human suffering in the world by leaving the poor to die.

Scala/Art Resource, NY

Albrecht Dürer's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (woodcut, 1498). According to Malthus, only war, pestilence, and famine can keep population growth in check.

A **Malthusian trap** refers to a cycle of population growth followed by an outbreak of war, pestilence, or famine that keeps population growth in check.

Critique of Malthus

Although Malthus's ideas are in some respects compelling, events have cast doubt on several of them:

- Since Malthus proposed his theory, the amount of food produced for each person on the planet has increased rapidly through technological advances (Lam, 2011). This result is the opposite of the slow growth Malthus predicted. The world currently produces enough cereals to feed 10 billion people, although it ends up feeding far fewer adequately, partly because many people cannot afford to buy more food and partly because nearly 30 percent of food goes to waste as it transits from farm to fork (Lal, 2016).
- Although Malthus claimed population growth has a natural upper limit, it is uncertain what that limit is. Malthus believed that positive checks would come into play if the population in late eighteenth century Western Europe grew much larger. Yet the Western European population increased from 187 million people in 1801 to 321 million in 1900. It now sits at about half a billion. It appears that population growth has an upper limit far higher than that envisioned by Malthus.
- Little empirical evidence suggests that population growth by itself produces misery (Furuoka, 2016). For example, despite Western Europe's rapid population increase over the past 200 years, it has become one of the most prosperous regions in the world.
- Helping those living in poverty does not generally lead to their having more children. In fact, some forms of social welfare produce rapid and large *decreases* in population growth, especially in poor, developing countries.
- Although the human sexual urge is as strong as Malthus thought, contraceptive devices and techniques have been developed to control the consequences of sexual activity (Eig, 2014). The introduction of these technologies fundamentally alters the connection between sexual activity and childbearing.

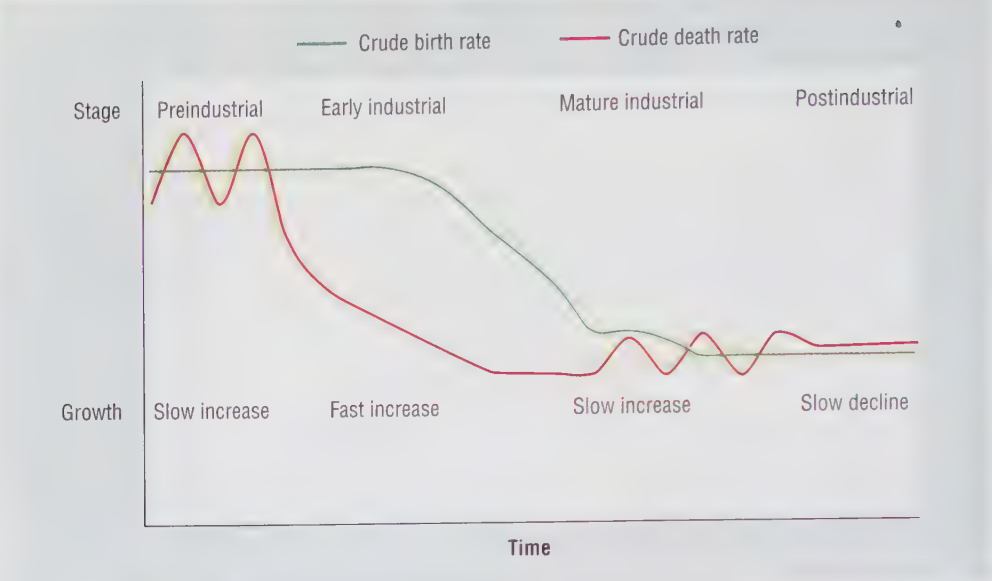
The developments just listed support the conclusion that human cunning has allowed us to wriggle free of the Malthusian trap—at least for the time being. To help determine whether our run of good fortune will continue, we turn now to a second theory of population growth, the theory of the demographic transition.

Demographic Transition Theory

Demographic transition theory argues that the core factors underlying population dynamics are industrialization and shifting cultural values (Chesnais, 1992 [1986]; Kulischer, 2019 [1932]; Notestein, 1945). The theory is based on the observation that population growth proceeded in four stages (see Figure 19.3).

Demographic transition theory explains how changes in fertility and mortality affected population growth from preindustrial to post-industrial times.

FIGURE 19.3
Demographic Transition Theory



Source: Robert Brym

THE PREINDUSTRIAL PERIOD

The **crude death rate** is the annual number of deaths per 1000 people in a population.

The **crude birth rate** is the annual number of live births per 1000 people in a population.

In the first stage, the preindustrial period, a large proportion of the population died every year from inadequate nourishment, poor hygiene, and uncontrollable disease. In other words, the **crude death rate**, the annual number of deaths (or *mortality*) per 1000 people in a population, was high, as was the **crude birth rate**, the annual number of live births per 1000 people in a population. Most people wanted to have as many children as possible during this era, partly because relatively few children survived till adulthood and because children provided valuable agricultural labour. In addition, in a society made up mostly of peasants and lacking anything resembling a modern welfare state, children were seen as a form of old age security.

THE EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD

During the second stage of population growth, the early industrial, or transition, period, the crude death rate dropped and life expectancy, or average lifespan, increased because of economic growth, improved nutrition, and better hygiene. However, the crude birth rate remained high. The population grew rapidly as a result of people living longer and women having nearly as many babies as in the preindustrial era. Malthus lived during this period of rapid population growth, which may explain his sense of alarm. Today, countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Guatemala are in this second stage.

THE MATURE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD

In the third stage of population growth, the mature industrial period, the crude death rate continued to fall, but less steeply than before. Instead, it was the crude birth rate that dropped dramatically. Although having many children made sense in an agricultural society, where children were a valuable economic resource, they became more of an economic burden in an industrial society. During this era, adults were employed outside the home, and children contributed little, if anything, to the economic welfare of the family.

Cultural lag occurs when people's values change more slowly than their technologies do.

The crude birth rate took longer to decline than the crude death rate did because of cultural lag. **Cultural lag** occurs when people's values change more slowly than their technologies do. For example, installing a sewer system or a water purification plant can lower the crude death rate faster than people can change their minds about something as funda-

mental as how many children to have. Eventually, however, the technologies and outlooks that accompanied modernity led people to postpone getting married and to choose to use contraceptives and other birth control methods. As a result, population growth is slower during the mature industrial period.

Countries that enter the third stage generally experience a **demographic dividend**—a window of opportunity for rapid economic growth that occurs when the number of working-age people grows faster than the number of people in non-working-age groups. Canada's demographic dividend began in the 1960s and is currently coming to an end. The demographic dividend in China began in the 1990s and will end sometime this decade. Thailand, Mexico, India, and South Africa have just begun reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend and will do so for the next few decades.

The **demographic dividend** is a window of opportunity for rapid economic growth that occurs when the number of working-age people grows faster than the number of people in non-working-age groups.

THE POSTINDUSTRIAL PERIOD

In the fourth stage of the demographic transition, mortality rates stabilize, but fertility rates continue to fall. Concern mounts in countries where the total fertility rate dips below the **replacement level**, which refers to the number of children each woman must have on average for population size to remain stable. The replacement level is 2.1 if inflow of settlers from other countries (**immigration**, or in-migration) and outflow to other countries (**emigration**, or out-migration) are ignored. In other words, on average, each woman must give birth to slightly more than the two children needed to replace herself and her mate. Slightly more than two children are required because some children die before they reach reproductive age.

The **replacement level** is the number of children that each woman must have on average for population size to remain stable, ignoring migration. The replacement level is 2.1.

In the 1990s, some Europeans grew concerned about declining fertility and its possible effects on population size. Today, no country in Europe has a fertility rate that exceeds the replacement level. In fact, more than half of the world's countries, including Canada, are experiencing a sub-replacement fertility level (World Population Review, 2020b; see Table 19.1). Because of the proliferation of low-fertility societies, many countries are at risk for a slow decline in the size of their populations unless they increase the level of immigration.

Immigration, or in-migration, is the inflow of people into one country from one or more other countries and their settlement in the destination country.

Emigration, or out-migration, is the outflow of people from one country and their settlement in one or more other countries.

The **second demographic transition theory** explains the decline of fertility as follows (Lesthaeghe, 2010, 2014). As societies are able to meet their material needs, higher-order needs begin to drive behaviour. For instance, the decision to become a parent is no longer fuelled by economic necessity, as it was when children worked on the family farm and provided elderly parents with economic security. Now, having children is chiefly a means of emotional fulfillment. As such, decisions about if and when to have children, and about how many children to have, are increasingly balanced against one's general aspirations. Because raising children is costly in terms of time and money, many people consider delaying the onset of child-bearing and having few children the best ways of maximizing opportunities for self-fulfillment.

Second demographic transition theory suggests that as societies are able to meet their material needs, higher-order needs begin to drive decisions about how many children to have.

TABLE 19.1
Total Fertility Rate, Selected Countries, 2020

Niger	7.2
Somalia	6.1
Mali	5.9
India	2.3
United States	1.8
Sweden	1.9
China	1.6
Canada	**1.5**
South Korea	1.3
Moldova	1.2
Portugal	1.2

Source: World Population Review (2020b)

Some evidence suggests that preference for few children is becoming entrenched. For example, in the late 1970s China imposed a one-child policy as a harsh response to spiralling population growth. Only wealthy families could afford to pay the hefty fines associated with giving birth to more than one child (Basten and Jiang, 2015). Then, in the 2010s, the government realized that China would soon have too few adults of working age to support its growing ranks of seniors. Consequently, the government relaxed its one-child policy in 2013 and adopted a new two-child policy in 2015. Have these changes unleashed an upsurge in the birth rate? Not at all. The reason is that several generations of Chinese have known only a one-child household, creating new norms around what is considered the ideal family size (Attané, 2016; Wang, Gu, and Cai, 2016). Arguably, once people become accustomed to having fewer children, it is difficult to coax them into having more.

Before rushing to the conclusion that demographic transition theory and second demographic theory tell us all we need to know about population growth, it is important to note that not all evidence is consistent with them. For example, the fertility rate is on the rebound in some countries, including France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Increasing gender equality may account for the upswing. It seems that if women have to take on paid employment and shoulder the bulk of household responsibilities, they will almost always choose to have fewer children. On the other hand, women tend to want more children when men share household work equally with them (Brinton and Lee, 2016; McDonald, 2013). This development hints at the role inequality plays in population growth, prompting us to explore the matter further.

Population and Social Inequality

GENDER INEQUALITY AND OVERPOPULATION

Kerala is a state in India with about as many people as Canada. It provides a compelling example of the effect of gender inequality on population growth. Kerala's total fertility rate is 1.7, about two-thirds of India's national rate and well below the replacement level. How did Kerala accomplish this feat? Given the arguments of demographic transition theory, we might expect that Kerala is a highly industrialized oasis in the midst of a semi-industrialized country. However, Kerala is not highly industrialized, nor is it among India's wealthiest states.

The women of Kerala have achieved a low total fertility rate partly because, historically, their family system was matrilineal (Nair, 2010). This means that, unlike other Indian states, rights of inheritance were traditionally passed to female offspring, giving Keralan women a greater voice in domestic affairs and in public life than was the case elsewhere in the country (Jeffrey, 2004). In such an environment, females were considered assets to their families. Today, Keralans expect girls to be educated, and it is entirely acceptable for women to engage in paid employment. Therefore, among all women in India, Keralan women enjoy the highest literacy rate, the highest labour force participation rate, and the highest rate of political participation. Given their desire for education, work, and political involvement, Keralan women marry at a much later age than do women in the rest of India and, once married, use contraception to prevent unwanted births more often than other married Indian women do (George, 2010). Later age at marriage and use of contraceptive methods drive down the number of children that a woman has in her lifetime. The case of Kerala demonstrates the general principle that, where "women tend to have more power, [the society has] low . . . fertility. Education and employment, for example, often accord women wider power and influence, which enhance their status. But attending school and working often compete with childbearing and child rearing. Women may choose to have fewer children in order to hold a job or increase their education" (Riley, 1997). Unfortunately, in most of the world's less developed regions, women fare less well than they do in Kerala.

CLASS INEQUALITY AND OVERPOPULATION

Unravelling the Keralan mystery establishes that population growth depends not just on a society's level of industrialization but also on its level of gender inequality. *Class* inequality influences population growth, too. We turn to South Korea to illustrate this point.

In 1960, South Korea had a total fertility rate of 6.0. Yet by 2020, the total fertility rate had fallen to 1.2. Why? The first part of the explanation involves land reform, not industrialization. In the mid-twentieth century, the government took land from big landowners and gave it to small farmers. The standard of living for small farmers quickly improved, which eliminated a major reason for high fertility; less economic uncertainty led to a decreased need for child labour and for adult offspring to support their elderly parents. Under these circumstances, the total fertility rate began to fall. Subsequent declines in the South Korean total fertility rate were the result of industrialization, urbanization, and higher rates of educational attainment. However, the process was set in motion by a decline in class inequality in the countryside.

The reverse is also true: Increased social inequality can lead to overpopulation, war, and famine. For example, when the governments of El Salvador and Honduras encouraged the expansion of commercial agriculture and the acquisition of large farms by wealthy landowners in the 1960s, the landowners drove peasants off the land. The peasants then migrated to the cities, searching for employment and a better life. What they often found there was squalor, unemployment, and disease. Suddenly, two countries with a combined population of fewer than 5 million had a problem with "overpopulation." Competition for land increased and contributed to rising tensions, ultimately leading to war between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969 (Durham, 1979).

Similarly, economic inequality helps to create famines. As Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen noted, "Famine is the characteristic of some people not *having* enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there not *being* enough food to eat" (Sen, 1981: 1; our emphasis). Sen's distinction is crucial, as his analysis of several famines shows. Sen found that, in some cases, although food supplies declined, enough food was available to keep the population fed. However, suppliers and speculators took advantage of the short supply. They hoarded grain, which increased prices beyond the means of most people. In other cases, the food supply did not decline at all. Food was simply withheld for political reasons—that is, to subdue a population or because the authorities decided that certain people were not entitled to receive it. For example, in 1932–33, Stalin instigated a famine in Ukraine that killed millions (Snyder, 2010). His purpose: to bring the Ukrainian people to their knees and force them to give up their privately owned farms and join state-owned, collective farms. The source of famine, Sen concludes, is not underproduction or overpopulation but inequality of access to food (Drèze and Sen, 1989).

Time for Review

- In what ways were Malthus's predictions about the causes of overpopulation correct? In what ways were they incorrect?
- How does the second demographic transition theory improve on demographic transition theory?
- How do class and gender inequalities influence population growth?

Environmental Threat

Having established that inequality plays an important role in population growth, and therefore in the risk of experiencing a population explosion, we now turn to the effect of inequality on environmental risk. We focus on climate change, industrial pollution, declining biodiversity, and biotechnology.

Climate Change

Since the Industrial Revolution began in the late 1700s, people have been burning increasing quantities of fossil fuels (coal, oil, gasoline, natural gas, and so on) to drive their vehicles, furnaces, and factories. Burning these fuels releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Global warming is the gradual worldwide increase in average surface temperature.

The accumulation of carbon dioxide allows more solar radiation to enter the atmosphere and less heat to escape. This process contributes to **global warming**, a gradual increase in the world's global mean temperature. Figure 13.2 in Chapter 13, Political Economy, graphs change in the world's annual average surface temperature from 1880 to 2019.

The warming trend is much stronger in the northern hemisphere than in the southern hemisphere, which is why, in recent years, communities in Nunavut, including Arviat, Igloolik, Sanikiluaq, and Repulse Bay, have had to install refrigeration systems to keep the ice frozen in hockey arenas. In the Far North, melting ice reveals tundra, areas of land above the treeline that are covered by grass, moss, and shrubs. Newly uncovered tundra contains rotting vegetation and animal remains, so it releases methane, which is 21 times as effective at trapping heat as carbon dioxide is. The new water from melted ice reflects less heat than the ice did because it is darker than ice is, thus speeding up global warming.

Climate change refers to a long-term change in the average condition of the atmosphere, which encompasses temperature, precipitation, humidity, and wind.

Climate change and *global warming* are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same thing. Global warming refers to the global increase in temperature, whereas climate change refers to the long-term change in the average condition of the atmosphere, which broadly encompasses temperature, precipitation, humidity, and wind. Global warming thus produces climate change. Box 19.2 discusses the new genre of eco-conscious games that use climate change as a theme.

Climate change wreaks havoc on the earth. As temperatures rise, more water evaporates. In dry climates, droughts occur with greater frequency and intensity (Ault, 2020). In wetter

BOX 19.2 Sociology and the Media

ENDLING: EXTINCTION IS FOREVER

Zombies, war zones, and sports have always been popular, but video games that incorporate themes related to climate change represent a growing market. Of course, they also need to be entertaining. This is a gap new eco-conscious video games aim to fill.

The Climate Trail takes place in an apocalyptic future, where the world has run out of oil and is besieged by plague, famine and war. Atlanta, the initial setting of the game, has grown unbearably hot and no one remain there. The cooler climate of Canada beckons, but the journey must be made on foot. The trek is brutal: food must be scavenged, most water sources are contaminated and players must outlast frequent heat waves and intense storms. You win if you arrive in Canada alive.

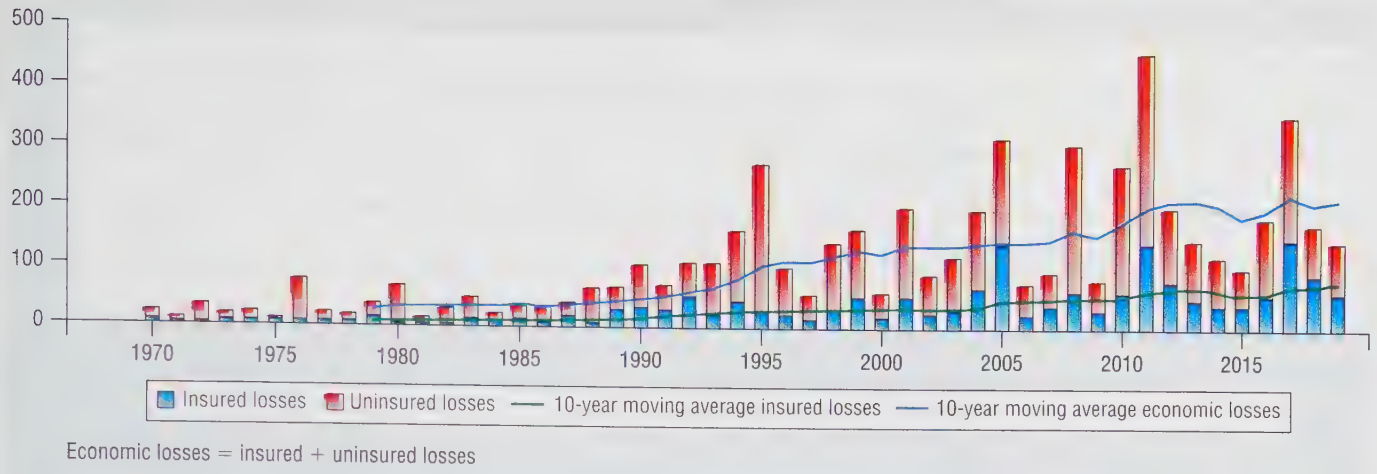
Endling: Extinction is Forever, is a survival game in which players operate from the perspective of animals. An endling is the last creature of a species. Once an endling dies, the species is extinct. In the video game, the playable character is the last mother fox on Earth. On a nearly uninhabitable earth, the fox must struggle to save herself and her three cubs. She knows of a distant land where they will be safe. The goal of the game is to get there without getting harmed by dangerous and desperate humans. Success requires all the cunning and stealth a fox can muster.

HandyGames www.handy-games.com

A scene from the video game *Endling*

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Do you think that eco-conscious video games have the potential to persuade people to act on the threat of climate change?
2. How might taking the perspective of animals be more compelling than a game that uses human characters?



Source: Swiss Re Institute (2020)

FIGURE 19.4
Worldwide Insured and Uninsured Losses from Natural and Human-Made Disasters, 1970–2019 (in 2019 $US billions)

climates, more evaporation causes more rainfall and bigger storms, paving the way for more catastrophic floods. Warming also melts ice, causing the sea level to rise. Hence, heavily populated coastal regions are more prone to flooding, particularly when high winds combined with heavy rainfall increase the destructiveness of waves crashing against the shoreline during a storm.

All of the processes listed above cause much human suffering and death. One indication is provided by Figure 19.4, which graphs the worldwide dollar cost of damage from natural and human-made disasters from 1970 to 2019. In this graph, human-made disasters include the sinking of boats, explosions, and the like. They account for less than a quarter of the dollar value of all insured and uninsured losses. Natural disasters include severe storms (hurricanes, typhoons, monsoons), droughts, wildfires, and earthquakes. Earthquakes do not have human causes and they show no trend over time. Human activity is mainly responsible for starting wildfires, but hotter weather makes forests drier and more susceptible. Similarly, climate change as a result of human activity intensifies storms and facilitates drought. Worldwide, the number of events that the insurance industry classifies as natural disasters has been increasing. In 1970, there were 40 natural disasters. In 2019, there were 202—the highest number ever recorded. Since 1970, the dollar value of insured losses has increased a hundredfold taking inflation into account. The dollar value of uninsured losses has increased even more (Swiss Re, 2020).

Industrial Pollution

Industrial pollution is the emission of various impurities into the air, water, and soil through industrial processes. It is a second major form of environmental threat. Every day, we release a witch's brew into the environment. The ingredients include household trash, scrap automobiles, residue from processed ores, agricultural runoff containing dangerous chemicals, lead, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, nitrogen oxide, various volatile organic compounds, and various solids or "particulates" mixed with liquid droplets floating in the air.

In Canada, most pollutants are especially concentrated in southern Ontario and southern Québec. Old, heavy, dirty industries are centred in these densely populated areas, where millions of vehicles also emit pollutants. However, many other pollution "hot spots" dot the Canadian landscape. The petrochemical, mining, and pulp and paper industries are responsible for high levels of industrial pollution in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

The government maintains a *Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory*, a list of known waste sites that pose a health danger to the public or the environment. However, the list of 7692 such sites (as of 2016) "does not include sites where contamination has been caused by, and which are under the control of, enterprise Crown corporations, private individuals,

firms, or other non-federal levels of government (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2016). It therefore seems likely that many if not most of the country's toxic waste sites are not on the list and that we do not even know where all of our toxic waste sites are located. Nor do we systematically assign or take responsibility for their cleanup. This neglect takes an unknown toll on the lives of Canadians. Low-income Canadians suffer more than others do because known toxic waste sites tend to be located in areas with a preponderance of low-income earners (Barlow and May 2000: 181–201).

Radioactive waste deserves special attention. Today, Canada has five active commercial nuclear reactors (Point Lepreau in New Brunswick; Gentilly in Québec; and Bruce, Darlington, and Pickering in Ontario). One hundred and four commercial nuclear reactors now generate electricity in the United States. These facilities run on enriched uranium or plutonium fuel rods. Once these fuel rods decay beyond the point that they are useful in the reactor, they become highly radioactive waste material. The waste must decay for about 10 000 years before humans can be safely exposed to it without protective equipment. The spent fuel rods need to be placed in sturdy, watertight copper canisters and buried deep in granite bedrock, where they face little chance of seismic disturbance or water seepage.

The trouble is, most Canadians are petrified at the prospect of having a nuclear waste facility anywhere near their families. As a result, spent fuel rods have been accumulating since the 1950s in "temporary" facilities, which are mainly pools of water situated near nuclear reactors. The federal government has yet to come up with an approved plan to bury nuclear waste in this country (Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, 2017; Perkel, 2020).

Declining Biodiversity

Biodiversity refers to the enormous variety of plant and animal species inhabiting Earth.

The third environmental threat we highlight is the decline in **biodiversity**, the enormous variety of plant and animal species inhabiting Earth. Biodiversity changes as new species emerge and old species die off because they cannot adapt to their environment. This change is part of the normal evolutionary process. However, in recent decades, the environment has become inhospitable to so many species that the rate of extinction has accelerated to at least 100 times beyond the natural or background rate (Ceballos et al., 2015). Thousands of plant, insect and animal species are facing extinction, with human activity largely to blame.

Overfishing, for example, is altering the delicate balance of marine ecosystems. Fleets of trawlers skew the odds in their favour by relying on sonar and GPS to help them find large concentrations of fish. Some of these ships use fine mesh nets to increase their catch. They may have been too "successful." In Canada, the depletion of cod, salmon, bluefin tuna, and shark stocks in the 1990s led the federal government to impose quotas and moratoria on commercial fishing. The recovery of fish stocks remains tentative, with devastating long term effects on fishing communities, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Light pollution occurs when artificial light prevents the night sky from achieving sufficient darkness. Because light and dark regulate much behaviour, light pollution threatens biodiversity through changed night habits such as reproduction and migration (Holker et al., 2010). Every year, millions of migratory songbirds become disoriented and crash needlessly into illuminated buildings. Insect populations decline when they swarm to artificial light and die of exhaustion. Amphibian populations wane because they have evolved to rely on uninterrupted periods of darkness to forage and breed. Plants and trees also depend on the daily cycle of night and day to govern growth and reproduction. Artificial light increases their vulnerability to frost and predators.

The extinction of species is impoverishing in itself, but there can be unintended consequences for humans. For example, each species of plant has unique chemical properties. When scientists discover that a certain property has a medically useful effect, they try to synthesize the property in the laboratory. Treatments for everything from headaches to cancer have been found in this way. The single richest source of genetic material with pharmaceutical value is found in the world's rainforests, particularly in Brazil, where millions of species of life exist. However, the rainforests are being rapidly destroyed by strip mining, the construction of pulp and paper mills and hydroelectric projects, and the deforestation of land by farmers and cattle grazers.

Biotechnology

Biotechnology refers to the modification of biological processes, organisms or systems for human purposes. Centuries ago, biotechnology was aptly characterized as the effort of farmers to engage in selective breeding of livestock and cross-fertilization of crops. Today, agricultural biotechnology is big business. Roughly ten per cent of the world's croplands have been planted with genetically modified crops (ISAAA, 2018). These crops are engineered to resist disease, pests, famine and frost; to mature quickly; and to produce a larger yield. Canada is a world leader in the industry. We are the fourth largest producer of biotech crops (behind the United States, Brazil and Argentina).

Biotechnology refers to the modification of biological processes, organisms or systems for human purposes.

The agricultural industry also employs genetic modification to increase the nutritional value and enhance the taste and appearance of food. Genetic modification involves introducing foreign DNA sequences from other species. Recently, the industry has adopted gene editing too. Gene editing involves controlled change in an organism's native genome. It does not cross species barriers, so it is mostly unregulated. And because gene editing technology is precise, inexpensive, and relatively simple, it has been widely adopted throughout the agricultural industry.

What does gene-editing mean for food consumers? In the future, mushrooms may never turn brown, corn may have less starch, wheat may be gluten-free and coffee may be naturally decaffeinated (Weintraub, 2019). Cattle can be altered to endure extreme temperatures or be born without horns, with significant cost savings to farmers who routinely dehorn their dairy cows. Instead of surgical castration that makes the meat of male pigs smell and taste better, scientists can instead turn off the gene responsible for the onset of puberty in pigs (Tait-Burkard et al., 2018).

Biotechnology in agriculture has been praised for its ability to solve some of the world's environmental problems. For example, biotech crops produce larger yields and require fewer pesticides, reducing environmental impact. However, biotechnology may create bigger problems than it solves. One prominent concern is the potential for genetically modified organisms to affect entire ecosystems. As noted earlier, genetically modified plants are resistant to insects, disease, and frost. However, once their pollen and seeds escape into the environment, weeds, insects, and micro-organisms build up resistance to the genes that resist herbicides, pests, and viruses. In response, superbugs, superweeds, and superviruses are born.

Similar benefits and disadvantages occur when biotechnology is deployed to deal with environmental catastrophes. Oil spills can now be cleaned up with genetically engineered microbes that degrade toxic materials into harmless components. This benefit is offset by concern that engineered microbes might displace or destroy naturally occurring organisms that already perform this task. If so, the result may be a decline in biodiversity. Other worry that the ability to clean up spills fosters complacency and lax practices, portending more spills in the future. Finally, remediation with microbes is a slow process. Oil spills pose immediate threats to plant and animal life, and biotechnology has yet to find a way to prevent these losses.

Encouraging the design of what some people regard as more useful animals and plants has also sparked questions about whether it is possible to create superior human beings. Advocates of this technology speak breathlessly of a "second genesis" and "the perfection of the human species." That future is closer than some think. In 2018, a Chinese scientist, He Jiankui, create the first gene-edited babies by implanting genetically altered embryos into women, one of whom gave birth to twin girls. Beyond the ethical implications (Jiankui ended up in jail for his efforts), no one knows how the genetic alteration will affect the girls in the long term. And, as is the case with biotechnology in general, there is potential for irrevocable and unforeseen consequences to any species enhanced with gene editing.

Global warming, industrial pollution, the decline in biodiversity, and hazards from biotechnology threaten everyone. However, as you will now see, the threats are not evenly distributed in society. Moreover, the degree to which they are perceived as threatening depends on certain social conditions being met.

Aleksey Kurguzov/Shutterstock

The environment is a potential beneficiary of biotechnology. Today, technology is being used to design organisms that can clean up sites contaminated by oil spills or heavy metals, generate biofuels from waste products, and quickly degrade plastics.

The Social Distribution of Environmental Risk

The environmental movement has not always paid attention to the social inequalities that drive unequal exposure to environmental threats. That began to change in the 1970s, when sociologist Robert Bullard discovered that the all-White city council of Houston, Texas, was in charge of deciding where landfills (garbage dumps) should be located. They had placed most of them in predominantly Black neighbourhoods. The discovery launched Bullard's career as an environmental sociologist. He is credited with popularizing the term **environmental racism**, which refers to policies and practices that result in racialized minorities being disproportionately exposed to environmental risk (Brulle and Pellow, 2006; Bullard, 1993).

Environmental racism refers to environmental policies and practices that result in disproportionate exposure among communities with a large racialized population.

In the decades since, sociologists and activists broadened their focus beyond race to other socially disadvantaged groups. Many have adopted an intersectional approach, recognizing that the combination of different aspects of an individual's identity can create distinct forms of environmental risk (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019). Class, gender, age, and other factors have been associated with environmental risk, and the combination of two or more of these factors has been shown to compound risk or result in unique forms of risk (Malin and Ryder, 2018). Some sociologists are no longer content to research the social distribution of environmental risk. Increasingly, they see themselves engaged in **environmental justice**, advocating the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of class, race, gender, age, and so on—with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (Mohai et al., 2009).

Environmental justice involves advocating the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of class, race, gender, age, and so on—with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

THE CANADIAN CASE

Environmental racism is certainly evident in Canada. For example, in the 1940s, the uranium used to construct the atom bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki came from Port Radium in the Northwest Territories, the world's first uranium mine. More than 30 Dene hunters and trappers were recruited from the nearby village of Déline to haul and barge 45-kg burlap sacks of the raw ore along a 2,100-km route to Fort McMurray, Alberta, for $3 a day. The American and Canadian governments had known about the dangers of exposure to uranium at least since 1931 (McClelland, 1931). Yet they withheld this information from the workers, who were completely unprotected from the ore's deadly radiation.

In the surrounding community, the Dene ate fish from contaminated dredging ponds. They hunted and camped in contaminated areas. Dene children played with ore dust at docks and landings. Dene women sewed tents from used uranium sacks. Until recent decades, cancer was unknown in the community. Elders often lived into their 90s. By 1998, however, nearly half the uranium workers had died of cancer while still in their 60s and 70s. Cancer and lung disease are alarmingly widespread in the community. Déline is known locally as "The Village of the Widows." Neither the workers nor their families have received any compensation from the government, not even an apology (Nikiforuk, 1998).

Similar stories of environmental racism are legion. Between 1962 and 1970, the river running through the Ojibwa village of Grassy Narrows, near Kenora, Ontario, was poisoned by mercury dumped by a large pulp and paper mill (Shkilnyk, 1985). In 1970, evidence of high levels of mercury in fish stocks led the Ontario government to ban commercial fishing in the area (Fimreite and Reynolds, 1973). The people of Grassy Narrows First Nation lost their livelihoods as guides and commercial fisherman, but continued to rely on the river as a source of drinking water and a traditional diet of locally caught fish (Mosa and Duffin, 2017). They petitioned the Ontario government to investigate mercury contamination, but for decades those calls went unheeded. The awful truth was finally revealed in 2017 when the government acknowledged the abandoned site was still leaking mercury into the river (Bruser et al., 2017). As of this writing, promises by the provincial and federal government to clean up the site have gone unfulfilled. Meanwhile, 90 per cent of Grassy Narrows residents exhibit symptoms of mercury poisoning, including impaired vision, muscle atrophy, and reduced cognitive function.

Class also structures exposure to environmental risk in Canada. In urban areas, wealthy citizens settle in neighbourhoods with quiet, tree-lined streets. The poor live in close proximity to busy highways and industrial settings. Among the many environmental risks of poor neighbourhoods is greater exposure to nitrogen dioxide, a by-product of vehicle exhaust, which is linked to asthma in children. Research in Canada's three largest cities confirms levels of nitrogen dioxide are significantly higher in poor neighbourhoods than in wealthier neighbourhoods (Pinault et al., 2016). Other research indicates cancer rates are highest among people who are most exposed to industrial pollution: typically working-class people and people living in poverty (Brym et al., 2011; Pollution Watch, 2008). A case in point is Sydney, Nova Scotia, one of Canada's poorest cities, where a steel mill dumped arsenic, heavy metals and other cancer-causing agents into a pond for a century as residents developed one of the highest rates of cancer in Canada. A serious cleanup effort began only in 2010, decades after elevated toxins were first discovered in Sydney Harbour and in local lobsters (Barlow and May, 2000: 144).

THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

What is true for disadvantaged classes and racial groups in North America also holds for the less developed countries. In 2018, the World Health Organization estimated that approximately 4.2 million people die every year as a result of exposure to outdoor air pollution. These deaths occur disproportionately to citizens of low- and middle-income countries. Another 3.8 million people die each year from household air pollution, which results from cooking with open fires or simple stoves fueled by kerosene, animal dung or coal. Here, too, deaths are concentrated in developing countries where citizens lack access to clean fuels and technologies and their homes are poorly ventilated. Because women and children tend to spend more of their time at home than grown men, they are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of indoor air pollution.

Pollution is getting worse in many parts of the world. Rapid industrialization, combined with lax regulations, are to blame. China and India exemplify this trend. In both countries, rapid industrialization has led to booming economies that lift millions out of poverty. But the price is high: China and India are among the most polluted places on earth, with six of the world's ten most polluted cities in China (World Population Review, 2020c).

In high income countries, pollution levels are declining thanks to stricter laws and technological advances in pollution mitigation and prevention. However, we must also recognize that for nearly half a century wealthy countries have been outsourcing manufacturing to developing countries where anti-pollution regulations are lenient or altogether absent. Here again we see how inequality structures risk (Lin et al., 2014).

The Social Construction of Environmental Problems: A Symbolic Interactionist View

Environmental problems do not become social issues spontaneously. Before they can enter the public consciousness, they must be discovered and promoted by policy-oriented scientists, the environmental movement, the mass media, and respected organizations. People need to connect real-life events to the information they learn from these groups. Because some scientists, industrial interests, and politicians dispute the existence of environmental threats, the public may question whether environmental issues are, in fact, social problems that require human intervention.

We must not, then, think that environmental issues will inevitably be perceived as problematic. Rather, they are contested phenomena. Their problematic nature can be socially constructed by proponents, and undermined by opponents. This key insight characterizes the school of thought known as **social constructionism**, a variant of symbolic interactionism (Hannigan, 1995).

Social constructionism emphasizes that social problems do not emerge spontaneously. Instead, they are contested phenomena whose prominence depends on the ability of supporters and detractors to make the public aware of them.

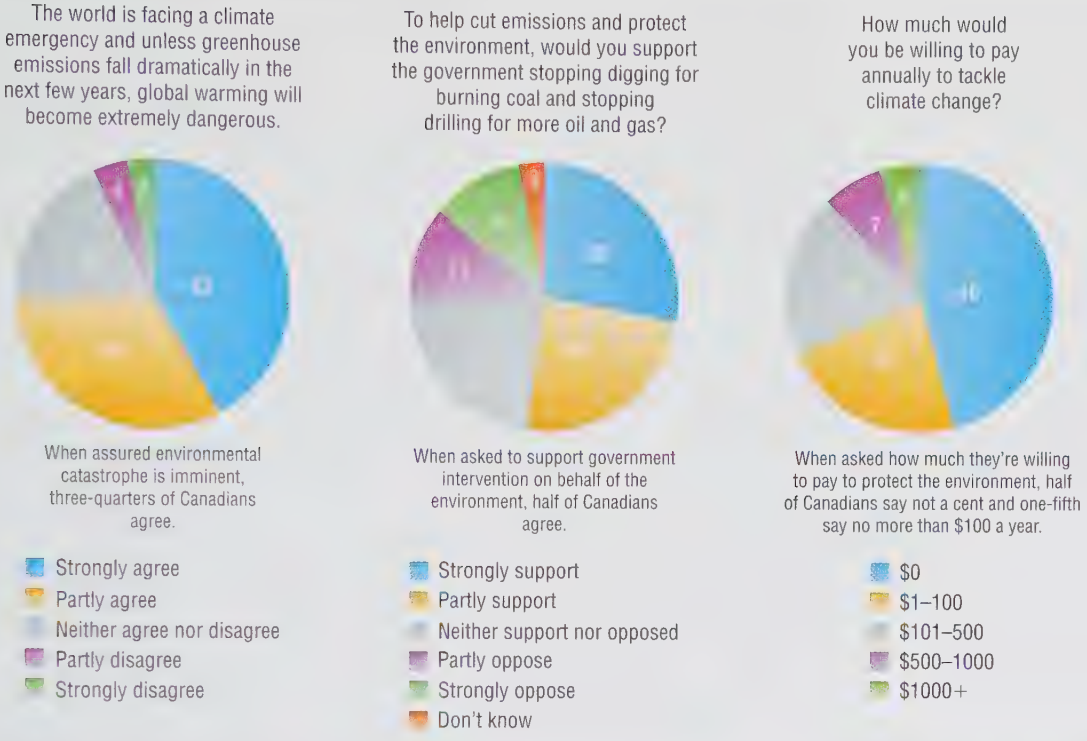
The controversy over global warming and climate change is a prime example of how people create and contest definitions of environmental problems (Dietz et al., 2020; Ungar, 1992). The theory of global warming was first proposed about a century ago, but an elite group of scientists began serious research on the subject only in the late 1950s. They attracted no public attention until the 1970s, when the environmental movement emerged and gave new legitimacy and momentum to the research and helped secure public funds for it.

Respected and influential scientists then began to promote the issue of global warming. The mass media, always thirsting for sensational stories, were receptive to these efforts. Newspaper and television reports about global warming began to appear in the late 1970s and proliferated in the mid- to late 1980s. As a result, by the early 1990s, repeated surveys showed that most North Americans with an opinion on the subject believed that fossil fuels contribute to global warming and climate change.

Coal and oil companies, member states of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, and right-wing think tanks such as Vancouver's Fraser Institute reacted by organizing a campaign questioning the reality and significance of the threat (McCright and Dunlap, 2000). The onslaught polarized public opinion to a degree. However, increasingly ferocious floods, storms, and forest fires helped to convince most people that global warming and climate change are real, caused by humans burning fossil fuels, present a grave danger to humanity, and require the immediate attention of policy makers (Dayaratna et al., 2020; Farrell, 2016; Mildenberger et al., 2016; Pew Research Center, 2019d).

The ebb and flow of public opinion concerning global warming and climate change illustrate how issues become social problems only when advocates have the capacity to grab the public's attention—and detractors lack the capacity to turn issues back into non-problems. Said differently, social problems such as global warming and climate change are social constructed arenas of conflict.

Note that the outcome of the conflict does not hinge only on who wins the most hearts and minds. It also depends on the degree to which ideas and sentiments result in the implementation of helpful regulations and the adoption of beneficial technologies despite their high cost and the financial pain they may cause entrenched interests. So far on this front, few Canadians seem willing to pay the price (see Figure 19.5). This observation necessarily leads to the question of where we may be headed—the topic of this chapter's concluding section.


The world is facing a climate emergency and unless greenhouse emissions fall dramatically in the next few years, global warming will become extremely dangerous.
When assured environmental catastrophe is imminent, three-quarters of Canadians agree.
Strongly agree
Partly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Partly disagree
Strongly disagree
To help cut emissions and protect the environment, would you support the government stopping digging for burning coal and stopping drilling for more oil and gas?
When asked to support government intervention on behalf of the environment, half of Canadians agree.
Strongly support
Partly support
Neither support nor opposed
Partly oppose
Strongly oppose
Don't know
How much would you be willing to pay annually to tackle climate change?
When asked how much they're willing to pay to protect the environment, half of Canadians say not a cent and one-fifth say no more than $100 a year.
$0
$1–100
$101–500
$500–1000
$1000+

Source: Connolly (2019); Wood (2019)

FIGURE 19.5
Sentiment versus Action on the Environment, 2019

Time for Review

- The chief threats to the environment are global warming and climate change, industrial pollution, the decline in biodiversity, and the hazards of biotechnology.
- Environmental risk is unevenly distributed, with more risk faced by people in lower classes, members of disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, and citizens of less developed countries.
- Environmental problems do not arise spontaneously. They are socially constructed by people interested in identifying and solving them and redefined as unproblematic by groups that have an interest in ignoring them.

What Is to Be Done? Functionalist versus Conflict Solutions

The Market and Technology

Functionalism holds that social systems are self-regulating mechanisms whose institutions tend toward equilibrium. For instance, a costly disruption to the economy will automatically signal the market to restore balance. The signal is price. So, for example, if a series of floods, hurricanes and forest fires attributable to climate change add a burdensome cost to the smooth operation of society, enterprising individuals will realize they can profit by inventing technologies that minimize such disasters and lower their punishing cost. Functionalist

theory thus leads us to believe that the environmental crisis will resolve itself thanks to the operation of the free market and technology. In the functionalist view, the profit motive and human inventiveness will combine to create new technologies we need to survive and prosper, ridding us of disruptive forces and bringing society to a state of equilibrium.

Some evidence supports the functionalist scenario. Following the oil shocks of 1973 (when prices tripled) and 1978–79 (when prices tripled again), new discoveries were made and new efficiencies were implemented so oil reserves grew and prices fell. In recent years, we have adopted new technologies to combat some of the worst excesses of environmental degradation. We have replaced brain-damaging leaded gas with unleaded gas. We have developed environmentally friendly refrigerants and stopped the production of ozone-destroying CFCs. In a model of international cooperation known as the Montreal Protocol, rich countries even subsidized the cost of replacing CFCs in the developing countries. Efficient windmills, solar panels and electric vehicles are now common. Many factories are equipped with pollution-control devices, preventing dangerous chemicals from seeping into the air and water. We have introduced cost-effective ways to recycle metal, plastic, paper and glass. New methods are being developed for decreasing carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.

Although market forces are helping to bring environmentally friendly technologies online, three factors suggest that these forces alone cannot solve environmental problems:

1. *Imperfect price signals.* The price of many commodities does not reflect their actual cost to society. For instance, the cost of gasoline at the pump is estimated to be as little as one-half the cost of repairing the environmental damage caused by burning the gas. A pump price that reflects the *total* cost of gas (the pump price plus the "social cost") might send a price signal resulting in the speedy adoption of technological and policy fixes. Thus, if the cost of gas were two or three times the current price, the sale of electric cars would likely surge. But because the pump price ignores the social cost of gas, the market fails to send a signal strong enough to achieve the needed change.
2. *The slow pace of change.* Our efforts so far to deal with the environmental consequences of rapid technological change are just not good enough. For example, even as world population increases, forests are shrinking in size and the capacity of fish stocks to reproduce is falling by 3 percent per decade (Britten, Dowd, and Worm, 2016). The amount of arable land in the world fell from 0.370 hectares per person to 0.197 hectares per person between 1961 and 2013 (World Bank, 2016b). Global warming continues to accelerate. One respected group of climate scientists and statisticians calculated that if we continue to burn fossil fuels at current rates, it will be exceedingly difficult to avert disaster by 2024 (Carbon Tracker Initiative, 2012).
3. *The importance of political pressure.* Political pressure exerted by environmental activists, community groups, and public opinion is often necessary to motivate corporate and government action on environmental issues. Without the efforts of such organizations, it is doubtful whether corporations and governments would define many environmental issues as social problems.

A Workable Strategy?

What would a workable strategy to solve the environmental crisis look like? It would require heavy investment in energy-saving technologies; environmental cleanup; subsidized, environmentally friendly industrialization in the developing countries; renewed commitment to voluntary efforts; new laws and enforcement bodies to ensure compliance; increased environmentally related research and development by industry and government; more environmentally directed foreign aid; and new taxes to pay for these policies.

Is this scenario realistic? Not in the short term. It would probably be political suicide for anyone in the rich countries to propose the drastic measures listed above. The suggestion that Canadian taxpayers should help pay for environmentally friendly industrialization in less developed countries would likely be greeted with the response that less developed

countries should pay for it all themselves—ignoring the fact that they often cannot afford it and that rich countries did not take such measures and reaped nearly all of the economic benefits during their own industrialization. Nor would many Canadian drivers happily pay $3 a litre for gas.

For the solutions listed above to be politically acceptable, the broad public in the world's rich countries must be willing to make substantial economic sacrifices to get the job done. However, surveys show that most people are unwilling to pay much of the cost (see Figure 19.5). More and bigger environmental catastrophes may need to occur before more people are willing to take remedial action. The good news is that there is still time to act. We have the capacity to influence how humanity evolves.

Evolution and Sociology

For many thousands of years, humans have thrived on this planet. That is because we have created cultural practices including technologies that have allowed us to adapt to, and thrive in, our environment. Nonetheless, there have been some failures along the way. Many tribes and civilizations are extinct, and our success to date as a species does not guarantee future success. If we persist in using technologies that create an inhospitable environment, Nature will deal with us in the same way it always deals with species that cannot adapt.

Broadly speaking, we have two survival strategies to cope with the challenges that lie ahead: competition and cooperation. Charles Darwin wrote famously about competition in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). He observed that members of each species struggle against one another and against other species in their fight to survive. Most of the quickest, strongest, best camouflaged, and smartest live long enough to bear offspring. Most of the rest die young. Thus, the traits passed on to offspring are those most valuable for survival. Competition, it turns out, is a key survival strategy of all species, including humans.

In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin noted our second important survival strategy: cooperation. In some species, mutual assistance is common. The species members that flourish are those that best learn how to help each another (Darwin, 1871: 163). Russian geographer and naturalist Petr Kropotkin (1908) elaborated this idea. After spending five years studying animal life in Siberia, he concluded that "mutual aid" is at least as important a survival strategy as competition. According to Kropotkin, competition takes place when members of the same species compete for limited resources. Cooperation occurs when species members struggle against adverse circumstances. Thus, in Kropotkin's view, survival in the face of environmental threat is best ensured when species' members help each other.

Kropotkin also showed that the most advanced species in any group—ants among insects, mammals among vertebrates, humans among mammals—are the most cooperative. Many evolutionary biologists now accept Kropotkin's ideas (Gould, 1988). Based on computer simulations involving competitive and cooperative strategies, scientists have concluded that "cooperation [is] as essential for evolution as . . . competition" (Nowak, May, and Sigmund, 1995: 81).

Relying strictly on markets and new technologies to deal with the world's problems seems inadequate. Instead, it appears we also require more self-sacrifice and cooperation. Grave consequences flow from relying too little on a cooperative survival strategy at this historical juncture. However, which strategy you emphasize in your own life is entirely your choice.

Similarly, throughout this book—when we discussed families, gender inequality, crime, race, and many other topics—we raised social issues lying at the intersection point of history and biography—yours and ours. We set out alternative courses of action and outlined their consequences.

Courtesy of Robert Brym

We thus followed our disciplinary mandate: helping people make informed choices based on sound sociological knowledge. In the context of the present chapter, we can make an even bolder claim for the discipline. Conceived at its broadest, sociology promises to help in the rational and equitable evolution of humankind.

Time for Review

- Differing in both speed and scope, the fourth industrial revolution is harnessing connectivity to develop new technologies that are, and will continue to, change patterns of living in unimaginable ways.
- The interests of powerful corporations and governments increasingly influence how new technologies are used to transform society.
- Fostering greater cooperation is one way to survive the challenges of the future.

Summary

1. **Why, since World War II, have people increasingly questioned whether technological advances are uniformly beneficial to humanity?**
   The environmental crisis and the repeated occurrence of "normal accidents" have prompted such questioning, leading sociologists to conduct research on the way risk is produced as a side effect of technology and on the social distribution of such risk.

2. **What are the causes and consequences of human population growth?**
   Malthus argued that although food supplies increase slowly, populations grow quickly. Because of these presumed natural laws, only war, pestilence, and famine can keep human population growth in check. Several developments cast doubt on Malthus's theory. Food production has increased rapidly. The limits to population size are higher than Malthus expected. Some populations are large yet prosperous. Some countries provide generous social welfare and still maintain low population growth rates. The use of contraception is widespread, allowing women to better manage the number of births. Still, the demands of the world's large and growing population on resources and the environment raise the question of how much longer we will be able to avoid the "Malthusian trap."

   Demographic transition theory holds that the main factors underlying population dynamics are industrialization and the growth of modern cultural values. In the preindustrial era, crude birth rates and crude death rates were high, so population growth was slow. In the first stage of industrialization, crude death rates fell, so population growth was rapid. As industrialization progressed and people's values about having children changed, the crude birth rate fell, resulting in slow growth again. Finally, in the postindustrial era, the birth rate continues to fall, eventually slipping below replacement levels. As a result, populations shrink unless in-migration augments them.

   Population growth is influenced by the level of inequality between women and men and the level of inequality between classes. Low levels of gender inequality typically keep crude birth rates from being too high or too low. Economic equality can lower birth rates by reducing competition for resources.

3. **What are the main environmental threats today?**
   The main environment environmental threats today are global warming and resulting climate change, industrial pollution, the destruction of biodiversity, and the hazards of biotechnology. While these issues pose risks to everyone, the people most exposed

to environmental risk are members of racialized minorities, lower classes, and less developed countries.

4. **Under what circumstances are environmental issues transformed into social problems?**
   Social problems do not emerge spontaneously. They are contested and socially constructed phenomena whose prominence depends on the ability of supporters to make the public aware of them.

5. **How can the market, technology, and cooperation help to solve environmental problems?**
   In principle, if demand for a resource is higher than supply, the market sends price signals encouraging technological solutions to the problem of insufficient supply. In practice, the market and technology cannot solve environmental issues on their own because price signals do not always mirror market conditions, political pressure is often needed to motivate governments and corporations to take action on environmental issues, and the pace of change is, in many cases, too slow. Accordingly, more cooperation among citizens, governments, and corporations is also required to solve the environmental crisis. This strategy involves renewed commitment to voluntary efforts, new laws and enforcement bodies to ensure compliance, increased investment in energy-saving research and development by industry and government, more environmentally directed foreign aid, and new taxes to help pay for these policies. Repeated environmental catastrophes could make the cooperative strategy more popular.

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